

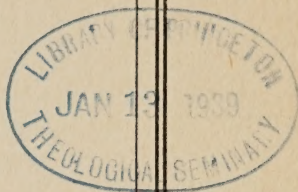
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BETHLEHEM NIGHTS

BETHLEHEM NIGHTS



by

SISTER MARY PAULA, A.M.

A Sister of Notre Dame de Namur



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Foreword

The reader is invited to imagine himself in the midst of an ideal family group listening with the *simplicity of the great*, to educated parents trying to give their children correct views of Christmas and to inculcate lasting sentiments of reverence and love for the Divine Babe of Bethlehem.

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FIRST NIGHT
The Spirit of Christmas

The Spirit of Christmas

IN both Church and State every season of the year is marked by special characteristics which make it more or less pleasing to different individuals. Without doubt Christmastide is a universal favorite with young and old, with rich and poor. At the approach of Christ's birthday, kindly thoughts exist in every breast; enmities are forgotten; joy reigns supreme. We all know why. God's great Gift to man comes to earth in the dark days of December bringing light, and warmth, and peace to those who bid Him welcome. Then, at least, man is imbued with a spirit of generosity—he wants to give, to make others happy, and his greatest sorrow is not to be able to do so.

Some will object that the custom of giving at Christmas time is but an echo of the Yuletide celebration of our Aryan ancestors, or of the revelry of the Roman Saturnalia. However this may be, the *motive* of the giving is certainly different. This entirely changes the meaning of our festivities. The Aryans were sun-worshipers who rejoiced when, after the Winter Solstice, the days gradually became brighter. They believed that the sun was born each morning, and that he sank into his grave each night. As the nights grew longer, they thought that the sun was losing his strength; the Yuletide, or the “turning-

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time," was, therefore, an occasion for great rejoicing. Which is the more sensible reason for universal happiness at Christmas, the pagan's or the Christian's? Surely ours—the re-birth of the true God as a lovable, attractive Child.

All must be merry at Christmas; but the form of festivities will vary according to climate and other conditions over which people have little or no control. In cold northern countries the sports are more vigorous and the feasting far heavier than they are in warmer climes. It is said that no country surpassed old England in merrymaking at Christmas. This was particularly the case in Saxon days. Countless stories describe the great hall with its blazing hearth, long tables laden with food of every description, the boisterous games that followed the hours of feasting, the songs of bards, and the huge bonfires of the evenings. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the festivities were extravagant, especially in the castles of the wealthy barons. The young people on Christmas Eve brought into the hall the green boughs which they had gathered with great fun in the woods. They then decorated the house, singing a song like this:

Lo, now has come our joyfull'st feast!
Let every man be jolly,
Each room with ivy leaves be drest
And every post with holly.

When all was ready, strong men pulled in a big log of oak or ash, called a Yulelog, which was soon burn-

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ing brightly on the open hearth. One of their customary songs begins with these words:

Welcome be thou, heavenly King,
Welcome born on this morning,
Welcome for whom we shall sing,
Welcome Yule.

Our own poet, Longfellow, understood the spirit of Christmas in feudal times and immortalized it in a favorite poem of every classroom in the land. Where is the schoolboy who does not know "The Norman Baron"?

In the hall, the serf and vassal
Held, that night, their Christmas wassail;
Many a carol, old and saintly,
Sang the minstrels and the waits.

And so loud these Saxon gleemen
Sang to slaves the songs of freemen,
That the storm was heard but faintly
Knocking at the castle-gates.

Till at length the lays they chaunted
Reached the chamber terror-haunted,
Where the monk, with accents holy,
Whispered at the Baron's ear.

Tears upon his eyelid glistened
As he paused awhile and listened,
And the dying Baron slowly
Turned his weary head to hear.

"Wassail for the kingly stranger
Born and cradled in a manger!

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King, like David, priest, like Aaron,
Christ is born to set us free!"

When light-heartedness gave way to puritanical gloom in England, merriment increased in Germany—at least among Catholics. The Christmas tree and gifts from St. Nicholas were—until recently, perhaps—the most popular features of the Christmas rejoicing. The merrymaking really lasted a month beginning on the eve of St. Nicholas Day, December six. It was on this day that children received their toys. This wise arrangement enabled them to give all their attention to the Infant Jesus on His birthday. In some wealthy homes today poor people are entertained and given useful presents from the children of the household. Thus do the pious parents train their little ones in the true Christmas spirit of unselfishness.

The fact that in 1850 Charles Dickens wrote of the Christmas tree as "a German toy" proves that a gift-laden tree, which we consider an essential part of our Christmas decorations, was not known in England before the nineteenth century. We read that in 1841 the Prince Consort had one set up in Windsor Castle. In a letter to his father he says: "This is dear Christmas Eve, on which I have so often listened with impatience for your step, which was to usher us into the present room. Today I have two children of my own to give presents to, who, they know not why, are full of happy wonder at the German Christmas-tree and its radiant candles."

All the human tenderness and charity which the

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kind-hearted people of the Emerald Isle have ever shown towards friend and foe in times of need are most conspicuous at Christmas. In honor of the painful journey of the Holy Family on that first Christmas Eve, blazing hearths and lighted candles invite the wanderer to even the poorest cabin. Happy indeed are those who have an opportunity to share what they have or minister to the wants of a group in whom they see, with the eyes of faith, Mary and Joseph and the Divine Child. No poems are more touching than those that describe some Christmas scene in Holy Ireland. Here is a lovely one which was printed in the "Catholic World."

O Cold East Wind! remember Those who pass.

Breathe gently on the pathway to my door;
Bright Moon! shine out and show the winding way
To the snug corner of my cabin floor.

The Christmas candle's in the window nook,
The turf fire on the hearth is glowing still;
O little road, be kind to Joseph's feet,
And ease his weary journey down the hill.

There's food and drink in plenty on the shelf.
A bag of wool upon the clean mud floor;
Fresh rushes on the ground for Mary's feet,
And there's no latch upon my cabin door.

In the land of the midnight sun Christmas is the one bright day of the rather joyless year. The wandering Lapps, the least merry of all earth's people, eagerly anticipate the time when, on their reindeer sleds, they will seek the nearest settlement that has a

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church in order to listen to the story of that first Christmas when the Prince of Peace came to earth. They stay in the villages for some time, and transact all the business of the year. Marriages take place, and the children are made happy by getting a little schooling. They do not expect toys. Perhaps they do not even know about the big factory that Santa Claus has in their own land; and besides, there are no chimneys to their dark huts. Santa likes chimneys.

There is no lack of gaiety among the children of southern Europe. Their joy is mostly of a religious nature. In France they put out their shoes for Little Jesus to fill; they build a Holy Manger in the living-room, having gathered all the materials themselves. In rural districts, the Yulelog is lighted on Christmas Eve, and the parents come to hear the children sing sweet hymns to the Christ Child in the *crèche* which they have made for Him. In some places, pious youths still go about singing the beautiful Noëls for which France was once more famous than it is today.

In every province of Spain the Christmas season is rigidly and gaily observed. The churches are the center of attraction until the Infant Saviour has been duly honored on His birthday. After the Midnight Mass, beautiful Spanish dancing is indulged in by rich and poor—but all in a religious spirit. After the morning Masses, the midday breakfast takes place. This is strictly a family gathering to which only relatives are invited. Festivities of every kind continue until the Feast of the Epiphany when the children receive their toys. On this Eve there are gay torch-

The Spirit of Christmas

light processions during which the "three kings" fill the shoes that little children have left on the balconies of their homes for this purpose. The hanging up of stockings seems to be an American custom.

To witness a universal spirit of spiritual joy one must spend a Christmastide in Italy. There, it is not Santa Claus, not a Christmas tree that men, women, and children are busy about. It is the *bambino*—the little Jesus. Not only in the churches, but in every home that can afford it, one finds an elaborate *presepio*, a representation of the stable of Bethlehem. Carved figures take the places of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Usually, other details are added to make the scene more natural—angels, shepherds, and dumb animals. Only after the family have admired the handiwork of the builders of the *presepio* is the dear *bambino* brought in and placed in the manger. Silent prayer follows, and then the hymns of welcome to the Infant God. Although the solemn religious ceremonies on Christmas Eve and the Day itself are the same throughout Italy, the gayer festivities vary greatly in different sections of the country. In Rome and Naples some attempt is made to keep alive the *Pifferi*. Long ago, for nine days before Christmas, mountaineers from Calabria and Abruzzi would visit the shrines of the Madonna in these cities; and, in imitation of the shepherds of Bethlehem, play on their bagpipes in honor of the Infant Saviour and His Blessed Mother. At Irpino, high and low join in a procession carrying an image of the Holy Child and lighted tapers. Rustic music is played; and there

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is great ringing of bells, and even a display of fireworks reminding American tourists of our Fourth of July. To see and to feel the perfection of Christmas joy one must attend the Christmas Eve ceremonies in St. Peter's. But these I shall not attempt to describe.

A characteristic of the Polish celebration is the singing of carols like those of old England—partly religious and partly jovial. These are sung in every home. A spiritual touch is given to the Christmas dinner by the eating of white wafers on which has been stamped a Crib or a Nativity scene.

On Christmas Eve in Flanders all lights are extinguished while the family sit before the burning Yulelog and listen to stories that each member tells for the entertainment of the others. When the log is almost in ashes, Christmas greetings are exchanged, and—where possible—all march to church by the light of lanterns.

In almost all European countries New Year's Eve is the festive time for children. It is then that they receive their gifts; and then, in pious households, the little ones sweetly read original compliments to their parents and grandparents. This beautiful custom greatly strengthens the love and union of the family.

In America, the most striking feature of Christmas among all classes, not excepting the Jews, is gift-exchanging. This custom has many degrees of merit according to the intentions of the givers. It can be mere selfishness, or it can be heroic charity. Recently, a radio speaker gave the following Christian answer

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to the query: "What do you think of all this giving of presents at Christmas? Isn't most of it vain, extravagant, and unnecessary?"

The beautiful custom of Christmas giving is but an outward symbol of the love and affection which we have in our hearts for our relatives and friends. When a person loves another he desires that person to enjoy every good thing of soul and body; and spontaneously he wishes to communicate whatever good things which he may have to the one he loves. Now Christmas is pre-eminently the festival of love. "God so loved the world as to give His Only-begotten Son"—and "A Child is born to us and a Son is given to us"—you remember these and many more beautiful expressions of God's love to us. And so from the very dawn of Christianity gifts have been exchanged at Christmas time. The practice must respond to a very real need of the human heart, or the common sense of mankind would long since have put an end to it.

If the carrying out of Christmas giving becomes at times vain and extravagant, that is not the fault of the practice but is an abuse of it. The thing to do is to correct the abuse, not abolish the beautiful practice just as one should correct vanity and extravagance in many other practices of life. To my way of thinking, therefore, Christmas giving is concrete expression of the affection which we have in our hearts for those whom we love and respect. When you give, give yourself with your gift; that is, give with your material gift, your love and affection and your respect and your charity. Give in the name of the Christ Child, and you may be assured that the Christ Child will not be outdone in generosity.

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A spirit of joy—the real Christmas spirit—cannot exist in a heart that is selfish or that is filled with fear. This is a truth of which one may be as certain as of the physical truth that “no two particles of matter can occupy the same space at the same time.” Fear is a terrible evil. Let us never be guilty of the unpardonable crime of putting it into the lives of children. Let them be joyous even at the expense of our nerves. It takes so little to make an innocent child happy! Above all, teach God’s little ones to find happiness in making others happy by sharing their gifts with their companions, and by giving to the poor. Selfish people are never happy; the Christmas spirit does not abide with them.

For us who live beneath the North Polar Star it is difficult to visualize a Christmas scene where no snow lies on the ground; yet we are assured that a genuine Christmas spirit exists in every clime—north, south, east, or west. The people of New Worlds have treasured the traditions of Old Worlds brought to every corner of the globe by faithful pioneers. Christmas is Christmas everywhere, since the Divine Babe of Bethlehem is born anew wherever there is even one loving Christian heart. There appeared recently a beautiful Christmas carol written beneath the Southern Cross by Mrs. Marion Miller Knowles. This and similar poems make one realize more fully how far-reaching are the branches of the True Vine, and how lovingly they cling to the sweet Babe of Bethlehem at Christmastide.

SECOND NIGHT

Bethlehem Ephrata

Bethlehem Ephrata

ONE of the most exalted places on earth is an apparently insignificant little town of Palestine. To compare it in size, grandeur, or wealth with London, New York, or with even the smallest city in the world, would provoke a sneer from any but a devout Christian. What is the secret of its dignity? It is the birth-place of the *Great Little One* before Whom all the potentates of earth are as nothing. It is Bethlehem, where Jesus was born more than nineteen hundred years ago. Would you like to visit this little town tonight? We can do so easily on our *Magic Carpet*, which can travel faster than any airship. Geography can be a great help to history. I say *history* because all our Christmastide stories will be true. Thus "Bethlehem Nights" may prove far more fascinating, and surely far more profitable to us, than the famous "Arabian Nights" that has had thousands of readers.

Some years ago I saw Bethlehem with my own eyes. My companion and I had the good fortune to approach it along the road that leads from Hebron rather than from Jerusalem, for we had decided to move in a northerly direction through Palestine. As we started out on donkeys one lovely morning, my guide said to us, "I am going to take you through the *Paradise of the Holy Land*." I soon knew that this

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meant the wide valley along which we leisurely rode, sometimes through olive woods, then viewing the fertile fields and the terraced anemone-dotted hill-sides adorned with rich fruit and vegetable gardens—all proving that the inhabitants were an industrious people who had a hand in making the approach to the birthplace of Christ worthy of its title, *The Paradise of Palestine*.

When we left the Hebron-and-Jerusalem road, we had about a mile to go before reaching the town. I should say *to climb* since Bethlehem is perched on two hills, and is about 2500 feet above sea level. It is, therefore, 300 feet higher than Jerusalem's highest hill, Mt. Sion. The temple was built on a lower hill, Mt. Moriah. Perhaps it was because I was a Gentile rather than a Jew that the words of the beautiful Epiphany hymn "O sola magnarum urbium" ran through my mind as we walked in the steps of the Magi:—

Bethlehem, of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from heaven
Didst for us incarnate bear.

Fairer than the sun at morning
Was the star that told His birth;
To the lands their God announcing,
Hid beneath a form of earth.

By its lambent beauty guided,
See, the eastern kings appear;
See them bend, their gifts to offer,
Gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh.

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Solemn things of mystic meaning;
Incense doth the God disclose;
Gold a royal child proclaimeth;
Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

Holy Jesu, in Thy brightness
To the Gentile world displayed,
With the Father and the Spirit,
Endless praise to Thee be paid.

Bethlehem has but three real streets of low, flat-roofed, yellow-white houses. We were interested to learn that most of its inhabitants are Christians, who, even when under Turkish rule, were able to maintain several schools and charitable institutions. Besides tilling the soil and raising cattle, the people spend much time in making articles of piety, which pilgrims to the Holy Land are glad to buy as souvenirs of one of the most noted places of the world.

Bethlehem is a very ancient town. We know that it existed before Moses wrote his five books. It was originally called *Ephrata*, which means fruitful. It is so called in the 19th verse of the 35th chapter of Genesis: "So Rachel died, and was buried in the highway that leadeth to Ephrata; that is, to Bethlehem." I saw this tomb of Rachael when we were traveling between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Perhaps Our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph stopped there on their way down from Nazareth. That Ephrata was not big enough to be called a town in the days of Micheas, one learns from the second verse of the fifth chapter of his prophecy: "And thou, Bethlehem

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Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler of Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." Let us fasten this verse well in our minds. We may need to use it frequently in our Catholic Action debates. Few people seem to be familiar with the second part of it—"His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." These words prove that the Messias was eternal; therefore, God.

In the peaceful fields around Bethlehem, the young boy who was destined to become a King and the progenitor of the Messias, tended the sheep that belonged to his father, Jesse. Bethlehem is often called the city of David. Here, also, lived Booz—and Ruth, a type of Our Lady. I could picture them all as I looked over the fruitful valley. My guide told me that St. Joseph's family lived in Bethlehem; and some think it has the distinction of having been the birth-place of St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin. Of this, however, we have little proof.

I am sure that none of us would care to stay in Bethlehem for more than a few days. As a town it is not attractive. There are really no stores. Provisions, as well as souvenirs, are in heaps along the narrow streets; and the work-shops are only arches with no windows. The town has not changed much since Jesus was born there. It has, indeed, seen several different rulers—Jews, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Saracens; but few of these left much of an impress of themselves. It remains to be seen what other rulers

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will succeed in leaving behind them. Recent visitors tell me that the most characteristic English sign they saw was the one at the foot of the road leading up to the hill-town: *Drive slowly*. It will be difficult for even the motor car to change Bethlehem. Another sign of the modern love of order is a *Bethlehem Police Station*.

The cleanest and best places for rest and recreation are the flat roofs of the houses. I stood for a long time on one of them gazing at the surrounding country. Facing north, I could see the rounded hills and the valleys south of Jerusalem, but not the Holy City itself. To the east, I caught a glimpse of the Dead Sea fourteen miles off, and four thousand feet beneath Bethlehem. On the horizon were the purple hills of Moab, the home of Ruth, and where the angels buried Moses. To the west, are barren rocks; and two miles away, the field where some poor shepherds were watching their sheep when an angel told them to arise and go over to Bethlehem where they would find an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes who was Christ the Saviour.

It was to see this wonder that the simple men hurried to the little town, and it is to stand near the sacred spot where our Lord was born that I and thousands of other pilgrims have made long journeys. The town itself would never have drawn us thither, but the Church of the Nativity would and does. It is built over the sacred cave to be near which St. Jerome and St. Paula left the grandeur of Rome and took up their abode in the obscure little town.

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As far back as the early part of the second century some pious Christians, with the permission of Pope St. Evarist, built a little oratory over the place where Christ was born; later the Emperor Hadrian had the shrine destroyed and one to Venus put in its place. Around this he planted a wood consecrated to Adonis. In the fourth century, however, the Empress Helena—she who discovered the True Cross on which Jesus had died—purified the place of His birth and built a basilica over the holy cave. Her son Constantine, the first Christian emperor, greatly enlarged and adorned the basilica. The checkered career of this sacred shrine would alone make an interesting story.

When we go to Washington, we must visit the Franciscan Monastery in Brookland. There we will see just how everything is arranged in the crypt of the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem.

At the time of the birth of Our Lord, the limestone cave must have been entered from the road. Today it is under the Basilica of the Nativity. Two flights of stairs lead down to it, and fifty-three silver lamps give light to what would otherwise be a very gloomy place. The walls of the crypt are covered by hangings of amianthus linen, which was sent by the French Republic in 1874 to replace those removed by the Greeks in 1873.

At the eastern end of the grotto is a rounded niche showing fragments of what was once a beautiful mosaic of the Nativity with a legend in Latin.

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Imbedded in the marble floor are a star and the words:—

HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA, JESUS CHRISTUR NATUS EST.

(Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born.)

Of the fifteen lamps that burn before the star, six belong to the Greeks, five to the Armenians, and four to the Latins. Every class of Christians desires the sole possession of the Holy Cave. This rivalry seems to be the only thing that mars the peace of Bethlehem. Unlike Jerusalem, the Christmas spirit—the spirit of joy—abides in the birthplace of the Infant King.

In 1847 the Greeks, bitterly resenting the presence of the Latin inscription, which apparently denied their claim to the grotto, removed the star. After five years of discussions between the Sultan and the French Ambassador, the Greeks were compelled to return the star. It is said that the interference of the Russian Ambassador at this time started the trouble that culminated in the Crimean War.

Going down three steps from the place of the star, one enters the oratory of the Manger where the Mother of God laid her Child on the straw and around which the shepherds knelt to adore Him. The Manger is here represented by an excavation made in the wall. The wooden crib, covered with silver by the piety of early Christians, has been carefully preserved in the basilica of St.-Mary-Major in Rome since the twelfth century. On account of the outrages committed in the Grotto of the Nativity by

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a band of Greeks in 1873, a guard is kept on duty day and night. The Turkish soldier has, since the World War, been replaced by a British policeman.

Of great though secondary interest to educated pilgrims, are the chapel and tombs that fill much of the space beneath the Church of the Nativity. There we find a chapel dedicated to St. Joseph, the foster-father of the Divine Child; a chapel to honor the Holy Innocents, some of whom may have been slaughtered in this and other Bethlehem caves whither their mothers had fled; a chapel in honor of St. Jerome who, tradition tells us, used this chamber—then above ground—as his study. There are tombs of SS. Paula and her daughter Eustochium, and of St. Jerome. The mortal remains of the latter were long ago removed to the church of Santa-Maria-Maggiore in Rome. What became of the remains of Sts. Paula and Eustochium no one seems to know.

The spoliation of Bethlehem's Holy Cave, as of many other sacred places, has shocked some pious people who are not capable of separating the chaff from the wheat, and who allow some objectionable works of men to prevent them from concentrating only on the traces of the Master which are plainly given in the Gospels and quite evident in Palestine today. The Turks rendered great service to Christians by leaving so many places undisturbed.

What one gets from any place—even a concert hall, an art gallery, or natural scenery—depends upon what one brings to it. The mind rather than the eye actually produces the effect. We pity the woman who,

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in answer to the question, "Would you like to see the Holy Land?" exclaimed: "Certainly not! I have read Mark Twain's book." Let us go to Palestine with a knowledge of both the Old and the New Testament, and we shall not be disappointed. We shall be prepared to see what our Lord often saw: hot, dusty roads, beggars, thieves, hypocrites, idlers, the blind, and the lame. Jesus worked amid all this, and was not annoyed. He was about His Father's business.

It is probably in Bethlehem that a pilgrim will have fewest distractions and experience the greatest peace. The headdress of the women, and the many fair Flemish and French faces that one sees among the natives, are reminders that the Crusaders left some indelible impressions on the little town. The inhabitants, though shy, are friendly. There is no wrangling of different creeds as at Jerusalem. The Divine Child, born in one of Bethlehem's caves, must have left as a legacy to His birthplace the true Christmas spirit—innocent joy.

The sentiments that every Christian should have on Christmas Eve—no matter in what part of the world he may be—are embodied in the beautiful poem written some years ago by Rev. Phillips Brooks—"O Little Town of Bethlehem."

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie,
Above Thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light,

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The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray,
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels,
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

THIRD NIGHT
The Lure of Bethlehem

The Lure of Bethlehem

EVER since the birth of our Divine Saviour, little Bethlehem has been a great world-magnet drawing minds and hearts—and bodies too—to the scene of the Messias' first appearance on earth. In our Saviour's birthplace all is sweetness and love; here one almost forgets the tragedy of Calvary and the sin that caused it. Bethlehem gave a home—poor though it was—to a Beautiful Babe of whom no one could be afraid. He was also a King; but no terrifying guard surrounded Him—only a Virgin Mother fair as the moon, and a humble workman, His foster-father, who had a word of welcome for everyone. No ordinary lovely babe could have attracted the Shepherds and the Magi, and both great and lowly ones of earth to Bethlehem for twenty centuries. This was no ordinary child. He was the only God-Man. He had come in pity and love to save mankind and to give us Himself. Is it any wonder that we all feel drawn towards Bethlehem, and that Christmas is a feast of extra joy?

There are two saints who were privileged to follow their inclination to live for a while at Bethlehem. They are St. Jerome and St. Paula. It was not idle curiosity that drew them there; it was a sincere desire to become holier by being constantly reminded of the sacred mystery of the Birth of Christ.

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St. Paula belonged to a noble family of Rome; and St. Jerome, to one of Dalmatia. Both were remarkable for intelligence, and both became very learned. But what is of more importance is that both became great saints although they possessed vastly different temperaments. St. Paula had all the sweetness, grace, and charm that made her a leader of the most cultured ladies of Roman society; St. Jerome had the strong, aggressive nature that made him the terror of his enemies, and a cruel oppressor of himself. Finally, grace triumphed in each heart, giving Paula the strength to renounce her wealth, her friends, and even the companionship of her dearly loved children; and Jerome, the meekness that subdued his passions and won for him the title, *Hermit of Bethlehem*. The Cave of Bethlehem was fittingly the last resting place of both Paula and Jerome. I will tell you how this came about.

Paula was born of noble parents at Rome about the middle of the fourth century. As she grew older, the finest characteristics of her race were made manifest by her. Beautiful in soul and body, and brilliant in mind, she attracted much attention and won the love of Toxotius, a young Greek of fine character though not a Christian. The two were very happy and had four lovely children. Alas! When Paula was only thirty-two years old, Toxotius died leaving her inconsolable. The efforts of her pagan admirers failed to rouse her from the state of despondency into which she fell. Fortunately for Paula, she was invited to join a group of noble Christian ladies who

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dwelt in the palace of St. Marcella on the Aventine. After much gentle persuasion on the part of Marcella's mother, Albina, Paula shook off her too great sadness and became one of the most enthusiastic members of the charitable society of patrician ladies.

Three years later, 382 A.D., two bishops came from the East to attend a council that Pope Damasus had convoked at Rome. One of these, St. Epiphanius, Paula entertained in her own house all the following winter. During the many conversations they had at table, she and her friends learned much about the lives of the widows and virgins who lived in the Egyptian desert. Paula longed to join them. The noise and luxury of Rome she could no longer endure—but there were her children—she could not leave them now, they were too young.

With the bishops from the East came Jerome, a very learned man and a fearless defender of the true faith. The Pope made him his secretary and empowered him to answer questions at the Council. This step was of advantage to the Church; but I am inclined to think that the holy friendship that sprang up between Paula and Jerome, and which lasted for about twenty years, was of more importance. To the influence on St. Jerome of St. Paula and her daughter Eustochium we owe the Latin translation of the Bible called *The Vulgate*. We use an English version of this great work. For the accomplishment of so remarkable an undertaking, the Holy Ghost inspired our saints to seek the peace and quiet of Bethlehem the birth-place of the *Great Little One*.

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St. Jerome remained for three years in Rome as the guest of Marcella. At her earnest request he became the teacher of the noble ladies who were eager for a better knowledge of the Scriptures. Jerome was severely criticized for teaching only women. When reproached, he shrewdly replied: "If men questioned me more about the Scriptures, I would speak less to women." Calumny, always active where there is notable learning or the favor of persons in authority, did not hesitate to impute unworthy motives to Jerome's activities. He was well able to defend himself, however, and to scorch with fiery invectives the calumniators who had intimated that he wished to have the disposal of the wealth of Paula and Marcella. Nevertheless, for the sake of the peace of the noble ladies, his pupils, he forbore raising a storm and decided to leave Rome.

From Ostia, the port of Rome, he wrote to Asella, one of the Aventine group, words that reveal the sensitive, affectionate heart that was hidden under a harsh exterior. I recall a few sentences of this letter which is still extant. "Many a time have I been surrounded by a flock of virgins, and to the best of my ability expounded the divine books to several of them. Study creates assiduity, assiduity familiarity, and familiarity a mutual understanding. Call upon those virgins to answer if they have ever had any thought from me other than those one should receive from a Christian. Have I ever taken money from any of them? Have I not always repulsed every gift, large or small? Greet Paula and

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Eustochium, who are my sisters in Christ, whether the world so wills it or not; greet Albina, my mother, Marcella, my sister, and also Marcellina and Felicity, and say to them that we shall all appear together at the judgment seat of Christ. Then shall be revealed the inner conscience and the life of each. Keep me in thy thought, and may thy prayers subdue the angry waves upon my way!"

Not long after the departure of Jerome, Paula freed her many slaves, provided for the spiritual and temporal welfare of her surviving children, and announced her intention of satisfying her longing to visit the Holy Land and Egypt. She would see for herself how the monks and hermits served God in the desert. Paula took with her to the East, her beloved daughter Eustochium and several pious widows and virgins who, like herself, aspired to a higher form of life than was possible in Rome even among Christians. Perhaps they knew that the Roman Empire was about to fall and that a place of refuge must be found for many who would flee from the barbarians. The vessel stopped at Salamis, and there Paula had the joy of meeting the saintly bishop Epiphanius whose words had awakened in her an attraction for the East. When the pilgrims landed at Antioch, they were met by Jerome and the monks who had accompanied him from Rome. Although it was winter, and the mountains of Lebanon were covered with snow, Paula insisted on proceeding at once to Jerusalem. A caravan was organized, and the two parties mounted on horses, dromedaries and

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asses started on the long pilgrimage which was educational as well as devotional. Jerome and Paula traveled as students of Biblical History and Geography. Jerome knew the value of travel when one was free to go where one wished to learn something worth while. There were no train schedules to follow in those days. For the ladies accustomed to be carried even short distances by slaves, this must have been a penitential journey. They were being prepared for the life they were to lead at Bethlehem.

Before the pilgrims decided to settle at the scene of our Saviour's birth, they went to Egypt and visited many monasteries and studied the rules followed by thousands who either lived alone in cells or in community with many others. Jerome, Paula, and Eustochium found at Alexandria the blind philosopher Didymus. For a whole month these four scholars held conferences on the Scriptures together. Jerome had brought with him many puzzling questions which had been put to him by Paula and Eustochium. These problems he in all simplicity proposed to Didymus for solution thus giving at least one proof of his desire for truth rather than fame.

After almost a year spent in traveling, thinking, and praying, the pilgrims found themselves back at Bethlehem and with an increased desire to settle there. A terrible struggle caused by the news of the death of her youngest girl, Rufina, for awhile shook Paula's resolution to remain. At length grace conquered, and she made up her mind to answer God's

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call and to sever every tie that bound her to home and kindred. She, who had a great capacity for human love, would seek only the divine. She would find where Christ was born forgetfulness, peace, and work for others. With the same energy that she had given to mastering Hebrew and Greek and the difficulties of the Scriptures, Paula gave herself to the task of having a monastery built for her companions, and a hospice for visitors to Bethlehem. She also aided St. Jerome to erect a monastery for his monks since most of his inheritance on the shores of the Adriatic had been destroyed by barbarians leaving him almost penniless. For his cell where he might write and pray and suffer unmolested, he chose a cave near the Cave of the Nativity.

From the writings of St. Jerome and from letters sent to St. Marcella by Paula and Eustochium we get an idea of how these noble learned people spent their time in Bethlehem. Jerome and his monks laid out gardens to provide fruit and vegetables for the daily food. Paula superintended the building and the routine of a convent. She and her Sisters often went through the fields around Bethlehem singing hymns, gathering wild flowers, and enjoying the scenery. They visited the Manger and occasionally the Holy Places in Jerusalem. Their chief occupation, however, was the study of the Scriptures. In Marcella's house on the Aventine, Jerome had explained many parts, especially the psalms and the minor prophets. At Bethlehem, urged on and inspired by Paula and Eustochium, he continued the

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work though often protesting that it was too great for his mind and pen. Like a great lion he would growl a little, but always end by yielding to the wishes of his disciples. By degrees, letters asking for explanations and advice came pouring into Bethlehem from Rome and elsewhere, so that Jerome had scarcely time to eat or sleep. His health soon gave way, and it is said that evil spirits tormented him so as to drive him to despair. In the Holy Cave near the Manger of little Jesus he found rest and comfort and the strength to continue his studies and teaching. The Latin Vulgate could not be produced without sufferings and temptations! These, and his nearness to the Babe of Bethlehem, softened the harshness of Jerome's character, and made him a model of patience and meekness to his brethren. To the nuns he had never shown the rugged side of his nature. I like to think of him as

The Homer of Paula,
Of Infantas the Tutor,
The first among Youths,
The last of the Ancients:
A David in his Bethlehem,
Behind the Star the Wise man,
The Ox at the Crib, ruminating,—
The gentle Ass tethered to the Stall!

There is a beautiful story told of a lion's devotedness to St. Jerome. Whether it be fact or legend, it is certainly appropriate and has been accepted as truth for so many centuries that artists have made

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the lion a symbol of St. Jerome; and have usually made it a conspicuous detail of their paintings of the Saint. We have prints of such paintings by Raphael and Domenichino. The latter depicts Jerome receiving Viaticum in the midst of his brethren at Bethlehem. One woman is kneeling beside the dying saint. It is Paula the Younger. In the foreground is the faithful lion.

One day, so the story goes, as St. Jerome was discussing with his monks some points of Sacred Scripture, he saw the brethren hastily leave their stalls and run in different directions. A lion had entered the room, the door of which was standing open. The poor animal was limping and evidently in pain. He approached the saint and held up one paw as if to ask Jerome to draw out a big thorn which was buried deep in the flesh. This the saint did very gently, and then poured into the wound a soothing balm. The lion was so grateful that he refused to leave the monastery. He followed his benefactor everywhere, guarded the entrance to his cave, and showed himself so tame that the monks soon lost all fear of him. After a while, St. Jerome gave the lion the task of keeping guard over the donkey whose duty it was to bring daily from the forest a load of wood for the monastery fires. The lion led the donkey to the woods in the morning, and went each evening to lead him home. One day while waiting for the donkey to return from the depth of the forest, the lion fell asleep. Some Syrian traders met the donkey and took him to lead their camels.

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When the lion awoke, he searched for the donkey, but, of course, could not find it. He went back to the monastery looking as though ashamed of his neglect of duty. Some of the brethren thought the lion had eaten the donkey, and they would have ill treated him had St. Jerome not prevented them, saying that if the lion had eaten the donkey it was because they had not given him sufficient food. He was hungry and had but acted according to his nature. The beast did receive a humiliation, however. He was made to draw the wood from the forest. To do the work of a donkey was, perhaps, a humiliation for a noble lion. A few days later, the traders returned. The lion met them and recognized his donkey. He gave a great roar which so terrified the traders that they fled, and the faithful lion with a triumphant air led the donkey back to the monastery. Is it any wonder that artists give the lion an honored place in some of their masterpieces?

St. Jerome had passed through many persecutions and physical sufferings; but probably the trial that cost him most, was the departure from this world of his most brilliant pupil and most faithful friend, St. Paula. The two had studied, and suffered, and prayed together for almost twenty years. Without Paula's encouragement and pleading the world would be without several of his incomparable works—a loss greatly to be deplored. Her example had drawn Fabiola and many other noble ladies to Bethlehem. With Melania she had provided a place of refuge in days of pagan persecution and of barbaric

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invasion. She had sanctified her own children, and, perhaps, had saved Jerome from himself. The holy death of this truly great woman occurred in the year 404. She had the consolation of being cared for during her last illness by her devoted daughter Eustochium, who left her mother's side only while she slept, and then it was to pray for her at the Sacred Manger of the Infant Jesus. St. Jerome had the painful pleasure of comforting mother and child during the last sad days; and, when all was over, of writing Paula's funeral oration. For her sepulcher, which may be seen today in the center of the Cave of Bethlehem, St. Jerome wrote the following epitaph:

In this sepulcher resposes a Matron
Of the learned Scipios a direct branch:
A descendant of the Gracchi and the Emilii,
Also of the illustrious blood of the Agamemnon:
PAULA is she named, Saint and worthy Mother
Of Eustochium, a pure Virgin. In former times
The principal and first Lady in Rome, the *Great*.
Later on she followed Christ in His poverty,
And in Bethlehem the *Little*
She made her dwelling place.

On Eustochium, impoverished by her mother's charity to the poor and by her own selflessness, fell the government and the debts of the monastery for nuns. She was glad to suffer want where Jesus and His Blessed Mother had no home on that first Christmas morn, but she grieved over the severe privations

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of her community. God soon sent relief and sweetest joy in the person of her niece Paula, known by us as Paula the Younger. This wealthy and gracious child was the daughter of Toxotius, the only son of St. Paula. She it was who carried on the work after the death of Eustochium. She was the pride and comfort of St. Jerome during his last combats with the Pelagian heretics, who in revenge burnt the monasteries which her saintly grandmother had built. Paula the Elder at Rome started the taming of the noble *Dalmatian lion*; and Paula the Younger soothed his last sad hours and gently closed his weary eyes in death at Bethlehem.

Several artists found inspiration in the varied scenes of the life of St. Jerome. Pinturicchio having been appointed to paint an altarpiece for a church in Rome, chose a Nativity. In the lunettes, are depicted some incidents in the life of the one who abandoned the luxury of Rome for the poverty of Bethlehem. One lunette shows St. Jerome seated at the left. He is clad in a gorgeous red robe and is preaching to an Oriental scholar and his followers, who are distinguished by their turbans.

In a large picture of the Madonna and Child enthroned that now hangs in the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, the artist Vivarini placed at the left of a high baldachino upheld by four angels, life size figures of St. Jerome and St. Gregory; at the right are St. Augustine and St. Ambrose—the four Fathers of the Western Church. The background is an elaborately carved screen. Against this the digni-

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fied bearing, the venerable beards, and the richly embroidered vestments of the saints produce a striking effect.

St. Jerome is less gorgeous, but quite as dignified, in Raphael's "Madonna of the Fish." He presents a very different but not less pleasing appearance in Correggio's "Madonna with St. Jerome." Here he is the hermit of Bethlehem, tall and gaunt, all absorbed in the only object of his love—the lively little Child in His sweet Mother's arms, pointing to a verse of Scripture that a charming angel is holding before him. St. Jerome has a half-open scroll in his hand—a symbol of his scholarly work in the desert. At his feet is his faithful attendant, the lion whose friendship he had won by his kindness. As St. Jerome stands in the foreground, he reminds one of the big shepherd in Correggio's "Holy Night." The picture is not unbalanced, however. A half-drawn curtain, St. Mary Magdalene, and a prying little angel save the situation. The majority of art critics call "The Madonna with St. Jerome" the masterpiece of the great painter whose very name means *joyous*—Allegri. This picture certainly fills the beholder with holy joy—the vivacious Infant, the tender Mother, the loving Magdalene, the smiling angel, the admiring hermit of Bethlehem, all contribute to this effect. Each face is illuminated by the fine sunshine admitted by the lifted curtain. For this reason, the picture is often called "Holy Day." That of the Dresden gallery is called "Holy Night" because all would be dark were it not for the light that streams

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from the face of the Divine Child. The coloring is exquisite. Our Lady wears a red robe and a blue veil falling back gracefully over her shoulders. St. Mary Magdalene has a robe of pale violet with yellow drapery. Little Jesus is resting His left hand on her loose golden tresses. No wonder the city of Parma was filled with lamentations when the conquering Napoleon carried off this treasure; and filled with rejoicing when it was restored by the treaty of 1815. When you see this picture in the Parma Gallery, I am sure you will agree with me that this is Correggio's masterpiece even though his "Holy Night" seems to be more popular at present.

Early in the sixteenth century, some generous persons of Dalmatia—St. Jerome's country—built a small church in Venice and established there a Confraternity for the relief of poor sailors and others of the Slavonic nation. Carpaccio was engaged to paint for this church seven scenes from the lives of St. Jerome, St. George, and St. Tryphonius. So harmonious is the coloring of the pictures that a great art critic said of the effect: "It is that of soft evening sunshine, or glow from embers on the hearth; resolving itself into a kind of checkering, as of an eastern carpet of more than usually broken and sudden variegation."

A picture of St. Jerome in his monastery work-room is the finest and the best preserved of the series. Our saint is represented as a strong, earnest man in the prime of life. He is seated at a writing table with pen in hand. He appears to be gazing intently

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at something outside one of the three windows by which the room is lighted. To the artist, he was probably looking heavenward for inspiration. I wonder what the *Dalmatian Lion* thinks of his Venetian setting which made Henry James declare that “‘St. Jerome in His Study’ is a pearl of sentiment and a ruby of color.”

In the Gallery of Bologna is “The Last Communion of St. Jerome” painted by Agostino Carracci. This picture is so much like Domenichino’s that the latter, who had studied in the Carracci Academy, was accused of plagiarism. The figures of St. Jerome are certainly alike in emaciation, but not in other details. I prefer Domenichino’s composition; it has more unity. Everyone is concerned with the dying saint—even St. Paula the Younger and the lion. The motto of the Carracci School—Universal Imitation—embodied a false theory, but it produced artists like Guido Reni, Albano, Domenichino, and Guercino. The latter painted the “Vision of St. Jerome” which calls to mind the temptations, the struggles, and the victories of the *Hermit of Bethlehem*.

With the passing of St. Paula and St. Jerome and their religious, the lure of Bethlehem did not cease. The little town has always attracted every lover of the Divine Child and His Blessed Mother. Few have been able to take up their abode there, but thousands of pilgrims have visited the holy place in mind if not in body. The memory of the birthplace of Our Lord cannot be blotted out. The Crusaders were attracted to Bethlehem almost as strongly as to

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Jerusalem; and even today there are in the little town many traces of the more or less prolonged presence of either the warriors themselves or of their descendants. Even the great World War left its impress on the birthplace of Christ. The lure of Bethlehem grows stronger year by year; it can never die. Of this we are daily being more and more convinced as we read of the thousands who are eagerly seeking a permanent home in the land that once belonged to the Jewish race.

FOURTH NIGHT

Christmas Legends

Christmas Legends

LEGENDS, like carols, have an important mission in the lives of Christians. The child and the open-minded adult can readily grasp what there is of truth in them; the scholar can enjoy the fiction that is clever enough to give pleasure without deceiving. Good legends may prevent a multitude of sins by replacing the dangerous stories told at many a fire-side on cold winter nights. Stories we must have. They are one of the world's best teachers.

A number of popular legends of marvels, supposed to have taken place when Christ was born, were woven into a pleasing and easily remembered poem by the late Denis A. McCarthy.

CHRISTMAS LEGENDS

Christmas morn, the legends say,
Even the cattle kneel to pray,
Even the beasts of wood and field
Homage to Christ the Saviour yield.

Horse and cow and woolly sheep
Wake themselves from their heavy sleep,
Bending heads and knees to Him,
Who came to earth in a stable dim.

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Far away in the forest dark
Creatures timidly wake and hark,
Feathered bird and furry beast
Turn their eyes to the mystic east.

Loud at the dawning, Chanticleer
Sounds his note, the rest of the year;
But Christmas Eve the whole night long,
Honoring Christ he sings his song.

Christmas morn, the legends say,
Even the cattle kneel to pray,
Even the wildest beast afar
Knows the light of the Saviour's star.

And shall we, for whom He came,
Be by the cattle put to shame?
Shall we not do so much at least
As the patient ox or the forest beast?

Christmas morn, oh, let us sing
Honor and praise to Christ the King,
Sheltered first in a lowly shed,
And cradled there where the cattle fed.

An old French legend tells us why the children of France and Spain put out their shoes instead of stockings on Christmas Eve. Long ago the pious parents of a good little boy were sad because they had no pennies to give their child who longed to place a gift for Little Jesus before the Manger as he had seen other children do. The boy tried to console his dear mother. "Never mind, mother," he said, wiping away her tears. "Father has made a fine crib

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for the Infant King, and I have gathered some nice clean straw. I am sure this will please Him."

"It certainly will," said the mother, embracing her child. "God knows we are poor and have nothing to give Him but our hearts."

That night as the boy tossed restlessly on his own straw bed, he thought of the new wooden shoes which his father had made for him. "I can give the Christ Child my new shoes," he said to himself. "I will go barefooted for love of Him." Quietly he took his shoes and placed them beside the Manger. In the morning he saw them near the figure of the Divine Babe—and they were filled with gold coins.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

Of all the legends of the Christmas tree probably the one that comes nearest to fact, the one that has more truth than fiction, is that of the setting up of the first Christmas tree by St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany. Here is one version:—

It was Christmas Eve, and a group of weary missionaries were happy in the thought of a peaceful, restful night spent in preparation for the great feast of the morrow. They did indeed make ample preparation, but in a way far different from what they had anticipated.

When the evening collation was over, Winfried, the leader of the band, thus addressed them:—

"My dear brethren, we have before us a night of fatigue and peril, but if we have stout hearts,

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I promise you success for our mission and a royal welcome for the Divine Babe who will come to earth again. We must make Him known to the worshipers of Odin and Thor in this pagan land. I will carry the Cross through the dark forest tonight over the Roman road to the thunder-oak where the old priest expects to offer bloody sacrifices to Thor. This we must prevent by replacing the false god's hammer with the Cross of the true God who will come as a little Child at the appointed hour. Will you accompany me?"

"Gladly, gladly!" shouted the men, seizing their leathern coats and their spears. "Let us go in the name of Christ Our King."

After a long trudge over the snow-covered road, they saw on a hill before them a mighty oak, a giant of the great forest. Its branches were illumined by the light of a fire that burned before it. In front of this were gathered men, women, and children all clad in white for the religious ceremony. There was an altar, and beside it stood an old gray-bearded pagan priest with a hammer in his hand ready to crush the head of a human victim kneeling before him. To the astonishment of all the spectators, the hammer crashed on the slab that served as an altar instead of on the deluded victim. What had happened? Winfried had slipped behind the priest unnoticed by the spellbound worshipers, and it was his Cross that had knocked aside the symbol of the false god and saved the intended victim.

Before the people could recover from their rage—

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or their joy—Winfried explained who he and his companions were and what had brought them there. He spoke fearlessly and made a great impression on the multitude. Finally, with the permission of the chief, who was secretly rejoicing at the turn of affairs, he read a document from the Pope whom the Germans respected as the All-Father of mankind. With intense interest they listened as Winfried in a loud voice put into their own tongue the Latin words of the Pope. The letter told them that Winfried had been appointed the chief of a number of holy men, who would preach the true faith to the All-Father's beloved children of the great forest; Hessians and Thuringians, Franks and Saxons, and put an end to the worship of the false god Thor—a worship that came from evil spirits and brought them no happiness.

To prove how powerless the false gods were, Winfried and his men began to hew the sacred tree with the axes they had brought for this purpose. As if to aid them, a great wind arose, and the tree was uprooted before the eyes of the now believing people. Thor was not powerful enough to save the thunder-oak.

Between the two halves of the shattered tree was a beautiful young fir tree. Winfried noticed it and cried out to the trembling spectators: "Behold a strong living tree untouched. It has no stains of blood upon it. It is green and fragrant, and it points towards the heavens. Let this be henceforth the sign of the true faith that will live within you and make

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you brothers of the Infant God born this night." All clapped their hands with joy. The beloved chief called out to his woodsmen: "Take up this tree of the Christ Child and set it up in my hall. Let us all go and listen to the story of the true God, and let a great feast be spread for all here present. We who were slaves are now free men."

The demons that haunted the dark forest must have been put to flight that night when the little fir tree was borne in triumph to the chieftain's hall where lights were hung amid its branches; and the faces of men, women, and children that, an hour before, had been pale with terror, glowed with an unknown joy as they listened to Winfried's story of the birth of Christ in the stable of Bethlehem, the adoration of shepherds and kings, and the songs of angels.

From that day to this the fir tree has been loved and made a necessary part of our Christmas joy; so we must praise and thank the good Winfried whom we call "St. Boniface."

A LITTLE KING'S GIFT

In some parts of Germany another tale is told about the origin of the Christmas tree. Some good parents, wishing to teach their children that a kind act done at Christmas time for some poor child will be rewarded by the Christ Child as if it were done for Himself, tell a pretty story year by year. Of course it changes a little every time, because people have

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poor memories. But that makes no difference; the main part always remains and teaches the same lesson.

A forester was hurrying home one very stormy Christmas Eve. On his shoulders was a big bundle of fagots, and he was saying to himself as he trudged along: "Thank God, we can have at least a good fire this cold night; so after the nice hot supper that the good mother has promised us, we can sit before the blazing logs and tell the children about the beautiful Child in a stable, and the angels, and the shepherds. Tomorrow, if the snow stops, we may be able to get to the village church and hear the carols. We can be happy even if we are poor. Christ was poor."

As the man was nearing the path leading to his little cottage, he saw a light in front of him, and then a young boy who looked poor, tired, and hungry. Thinking it was a lost child, the forester hurried toward him, but the light and the child vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. "I must be dreaming," murmured the good man. "Perhaps I am freezing." He walked more rapidly, and in a few minutes he was being warmed by the joyous welcome of his wife and children.

Happy and contented, the family sat down to eat the simple but wholesome meal. Scarcely had they done so, when a knock came to the door and in walked the very child that the forester had met in the wood. This time, He spent the night in the little cottage. Each one shared his meal with Him; and the eldest son gave Him his own cozy bed and

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slept soundly before the fire that gave out a little heat all that night. In the morning the family were awakened by songs of angels, and they saw the little stranger transformed into what He really was—the Christ Child. It was He whom they had entertained in their poverty; now He would repay them from the abundance of His riches. Breaking off a branch from a tall fir tree that stood a short distance from the cottage, He set it in the earth saying: “You have given gifts to me, now receive this gift from me. It will bear fruit every year at Christmastide, and its light will brighten your home and your hearts. We shall call it the Christmas Tree.”

WHO CONQUERED WITTEKIND?

Ages ago—in the eighth century to be exact—there lived two powerful chieftains: one, a loyal son of the true Church; the other, a staunch pagan and worshiper of Odin and Thor, false German gods. The former was Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, king of the Franks; the latter was Wittekind the chief of the Saxons who were determined not to be subdued by the Franks. Both Charlemagne and Wittekind were brave men, noble by nature and loved by their followers, who readily obeyed their decisions even in religious matters. Many pagan tribes had been converted to Christianity by St. Boniface and his missionaries, but the Saxons clung to the religion of their forefathers tenaciously.

Charlemagne conquered the brave Saxons and

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tried to win them to the true faith. Some accepted baptism through fear of the mighty conqueror. This was not a true conversion. Wittekind was too honest to yield without being convinced that the Christians were right. We shall see how God rewarded his sincerity and the zeal of Charlemagne, who was most anxious to have the noble Wittekind and his faithful followers embrace the faith through conviction. He invited the chief and his councilmen to spend the Christmas season at his palace. He treated Wittekind with great respect, and they had several discussions in regard to religion. Finally, on the day on which a great banquet was to be held in the palace for Charlemagne's Frankish nobles and his Saxon guests, Wittekind said: "Great King, I know you wish me and my countrymen well, you are not a treacherous man. You are learned, and we are not. Your religion does not suit us. It asks too much of men. Odin and Thor offer us the pleasures that we can understand."

"You and your tribesmen are hardy warriors and need the good things of earth for strength of body," replied Charlemagne. "But is that all? You have souls also, destined for a higher life. They also need strength. This strength only our religion can give."

"Is this strength that you talk about given only to kings and nobles?" asked Wittekind.

"It is given to all, high and low," answered Charlemagne. "We are brothers of Jesus Christ, who treats us all alike. He loves us and commands us to love one another as we love ourselves."

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"That I cannot believe, and I know that you do not believe it yourself," said the Saxon chief scornfully.

The king flushed with astonishment. "How is that?" he cried. "You accuse me of hypocrisy?"

"No, no," replied the offender. "Not that. You think you believe what you say, but your way of living proves that you do not. I do not mean to be rude. I am not a scholar like you, great Charlemagne. I will explain. As I was drawing near to your palace with my council, I saw crowds of poor people, ragged, blind, or lame, around the kitchens, and was told that they were not your guests; that they were only waiting to receive what the cooks might possibly find unfit for even the table of your serfs. Can you tell me that you believe that those wretched men are your brothers for whom your God shed His blood and died? Will He at your judgment say to you with a smile, 'Come, what thou hast done to the least of my brethren, thou hast done unto Me. Receive now thy reward?'"

The king hung his head in shame, and silently withdrew. Sorrow, not resentment, was in his heart. The pagan had taught the Christian a salutary lesson.

That evening the great banquet hall presented an unusual scene. The bright torches and the groaning tables were as usual for the Christmas feast, but the floor had been strewn with rushes, and all the beggars that Wittekind had seen at the gates were seated there ready to be served as they had never been served before. Charlemagne had ordered that the best

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food and drink should be given them. When this sight greeted the astonished eyes of Wittekind, who entered the hall with the host, his conqueror, he was silent for a few moments; then he bowed low before Charlemagne and said: "King Charles, now I believe that you believe." "May I soon be able to say the same to you," murmured the king; then, looking well pleased at the motley crowd that filled the banquet hall, he shouted: "Come, my friends and brothers, let us all make merry in the name of our Infant God and King born this blessed night. Let Franks and Saxons adore Him!"

From that day a greater Conqueror than Charlemagne besieged the fortress that Pride had built around the stubborn chief Wittekind. He felt something knocking at his heart, and the Christian truths that he heard his own converted soldiers talking about daily made him feel restless. Grace worked slowly but surely. Over and over again he said to himself, "If a God died for me, I must worship Him. They say that He is in the Host that Christians adore, and that He gives them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink. I long to believe, but I can not. Perhaps I am unworthy to have a God for my King!" And Wittekind was sad.

The following Easter a man dressed as a beggar slipped into the brilliantly lighted church unnoticed by the great throng of worshipers. Trembling with awe, he watched every movement of the clergy at the high altar. At the elevation he saw in the priest's hands, not a round host, but a beautiful smiling

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Babe, who held out His little arms invitingly towards
the now humble and happy king of the Saxons. The
Infant Jesus had conquered Wittekind.

AN ARMENIAN MYTH

Three ancient men in Bethlehem's cave
With awful wonder stand;
A voice had called them from their grave
In some far Eastern land.

They lived, they trod the former earth
When the old waters swelled;
The ark, that womb of second birth,
Their house and lineage held.

Pale Japhet bows the knee with gold;
Bright Sem sweet incense brings;
And Cam, the myrrh his finger holds—
Lo, the three orient kings.

Types of the total earth, they hailed
The signal's starry frame;
Shuddering with second life, they quailed
At the Child Jesus' name.

Then slow the patriarchs turned and trod,
And this their parting sigh:
"Our eyes have seen the living God;
And now—once more to die."

THE STARRY CLOAK

Many years ago there lived in a fair land, called
the Emerald Isle, a very dear little girl whom every-

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body loved. She was not only pretty; she had sweet, kind ways and a great love for the Mother of God. Perhaps this is why little children followed her about, and even ugly men and cattle grew gentle when Bridgid, as she was called, came near them. She worked hard; for although she was a king's daughter, she was lost during a great battle. A herdsman found the child and took her to his humble dwelling, where his wife watched over the little princess for several years.

Bridgid learned the chief truths of Christianity, and found great delight in thinking about Jesus, and Mary, and Joseph. Most frequently did she picture to herself the Babe of Bethlehem lying in a manger as He was on that first Christmas Night. Often she saw in vision many things that took place during the Divine Infancy. These visions may have been ordinary dreams; but since the little girl led such a holy life that she became a great saint, we can not be blamed if we think they were really extraordinary privileges. At any rate, they prove that during her waking hours Bridgid's thoughts must have been very beautiful.

One bright, cool day, Bridgid wrapped her heavy blue cloak around her and started off to draw water for her master's horse. Her chores had been extra heavy that day; so when she reached the well, she sat down to rest and enjoy the singing of a little bird near by. Looking down into the water of the well, she saw a strange little town; it was hot and dusty, and had queer flat-roofed houses glaring in the sun.

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Soon Bridgid began to feel uneasy. She thought she was an innkeeper's daughter who had been given charge of the guests. Folks kept coming and coming until there was not a vacant room left, nor food for another one. In distress she went to ask her father what she should do. As she opened the door of the inn, she saw two travelers coming toward her. One was a middle-aged man carrying a staff; and the other, a young girl with a baby in her arms. Both man and woman looked tired and hungry. Bridgid's sympathy went out to them immediately. She invited them into the little courtyard and quickly gathered some straw to make a seat for the weary mother. There was nothing better at hand for these guests to whom, somehow, she felt strangely attracted. In her eyes, though they were clad in the garments of the working class, they seemed royal. Who were they? What could she give them? There was nothing—not even a drink that she could offer.

The lady noticed the distress of the young girl, and with a sweet smile made her feel quite at ease. "I can at least give you my old cloak," said Bridgid. "It will keep you and the baby warm." She folded her coarse blue cloak around them and ran off to the cattleshed. "I must get them a drink," she said to herself. The cows gave her a little milk, which she carried back to the courtyard. To her astonishment, she beheld the mother and child in a blaze of glory. She knew then that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were her guests. Throwing herself on her knees, she offered the milk. Mary drank it, and then gently placed the

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Babe in Bridgid's arms. Joseph took the blue cloak and put it on her own shoulders again. She was in an ecstasy. She could neither speak nor move.

When Bridgid recovered, she found herself sitting by the well in her own land. How it all happened she did not know. Soon some of her little friends, seeing her at the well, ran towards her expecting her to play with them as she usually did. Suddenly they stopped and cried: "Look at Bridgid's cloak! How beautiful it is! The fairies must have been here!" The old blue cloak was really covered with bright jewels, and a great star blazed in the center. This cloak Bridgid wore ever after. It had sheltered the Infant Jesus, and now it must keep warm in her pure heart the love of God and her neighbor. When people met St. Bridgid, they thought she looked like the Blessed Virgin, she was so beautiful in her starry blue cloak.

ST. CHRISTOPHER

One of the special friends of Little Jesus is St. Christopher, whose medal you see hanging in the automobiles of Catholic owners. We feel safe when St. Christopher drives a machine for us if we are familiar with the following story which is at least based on truth.

The father of Offerus—the real name of the saint whom we call Christopher—was a pagan king in Arabia. He was a good, generous man for a heathen, and he loved his Christian wife and his little son. He was so proud of little Offerus, that he dedicated

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him to the false god Apollo, who was supposed to make little boys strong and handsome. Offerus did become very strong and handsome, but it was the true God that made him so, not Apollo. The good Christian Queen prayed every day to the Mother of the Babe of Bethlehem begging her to keep Offerus pure and holy like her Divine Son. Of course the Blessed Virgin answered the Queen's prayer, but it took a long time for Offerus to become acquainted with the Infant Jesus. This is how it happened.

Under his pagan teachers, Offerus heard himself praised so often for his really extraordinary strength, that he thought that he could never willingly obey a man who was not even stronger than he was, and who had no fear. When Offerus was a young man, his father, who wanted his son to be happy, gave him permission to go out in search of such a man. He joined a band of robbers and thought he had discovered such a one in the chief who was afraid only of the devil. Poor Offerus, not realizing what he was doing, became a slave of Lucifer.

"You deceive yourself," said a man, riding near him one day. "This Devil-Chief, it is true, is afraid of only one thing on earth; but he is mightily afraid of that. Watch the terror on his face whenever we pass a Wayside Cross. He is afraid of the Crucified." Offerus, terrified, immediately fled and sought refuge in a cave which happened to be the home of a holy man who instructed him until he became a Christian and a saint. He had found the only One who fears nothing.

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Following the advice of the hermit, Offerus, to make reparation for his sins, renounced all his possessions and accepted the task of carrying travelers on his broad shoulders across a dangerous stream. This he did cheerfully in bitter cold weather as well as during the warm summer. His greatest pleasure was carrying feeble people especially little children.

One stormy day no travelers came to the stream. The big giant felt sad; for he did not like to be idle. He wanted to make good use of the strength God had given him. Suddenly, there stood before him the loveliest little boy he had ever seen.

"Please take me across the stream," said the child in tones like sweetest music.

Gladly Offerus lifted the boy to his shoulders, and was astonished to feel no weight until they had reached the middle of the stream. Then the little one became very heavy; so heavy that the giant felt his own strength giving way and a great fear came over him. He struggled on, however.

"Dear little one," said Offerus, "what has made you so heavy? You had scarcely any weight when we started."

"I am heavy," the child replied, "because I am carrying the whole weight of the world in my hands."

"How is that?" said Offerus. "Your hands are so tiny."

"I can carry the world," the child answered, "because I am the Master of it and I love it."

At these words all fear left Offerus, and he soon reached the opposite bank where he put down his

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precious burden which had again become very light.

Offerus was sure now that he had carried on his shoulders the Divine Child whom his Christian mother loved. He begged the Little One to give him a proof that He was really Master of the World. Jesus—for it was He—told Offerus to plant the huge staff that he carried. Offerus obeyed, and immediately a beautiful palm tree rose in its place. It flourished and bore fruit. Many miracles took place on the banks of that stream, and many persons were converted to Christianity. This so enraged the Roman Governor, that he ordered Offerus to be thrown into prison and tortured until he denied Jesus Christ. This the giant refused to do. The Babe of Bethlehem had given him strength of soul as well as strength of body.

On the twenty-fifth day of July our Holy Mother Church honors Offerus under the title of St. Christopher. Travelers seek his aid, especially when crossing dangerous rivers. He is now invoked as the patron Saint of motorists. That is why we keep his medal in our cars. When we invoke the aid of St. Christopher, let us not forget to ask strength of mind and body for ourselves from Little Jesus.

FIFTH NIGHT

Christmas Carols

Christmas Carols

CHRISTMAS carols are often confused with Christmas hymns. It is true that both have common elements; however, they differ essentially. The chief characteristic of a hymn is devotion shown by spiritual joy and adoration; that of a carol, is earthly joy and welcome. Christmas carols are alike in honoring a God who has come to save us, and a human Child who has come to cheer us. It is natural for us to dance and sing when we are extra happy. Children do this spontaneously, especially on Christmas morning. Long ago, God's angels set us an example of exterior joy when they flew down from Heaven one midnight and sang, "Glory be to God on high and on earth peace to men of good will." Notice their words *peace to men of good will* not *good will to men*. Peace accompanied by joy is for those only who deserve it as did the simple shepherds who were watching their sheep that first Christmas Eve. I am sure those good men sang as they ran towards Bethlehem. They surely did when they were hurrying home to tell the news to their families and neighbors. Today devout persons sing in their hearts when returning from Midnight Mass, especially if they have visited a replica of the cave of Bethlehem erected in the church.

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Carols are an important part of our Catholic inheritance. They were folk-songs expressing the sentiments of Catholic people at the approach of Christmas, and prove that domestic and religious joys were closely associated. It is a hopeful sign in English-speaking countries that the desire for carol singing is returning. Many devout, uneducated Catholics who had heard of carols only as a part of the Christmas service held in Protestant churches, were astonished when the originally Catholic custom was revived, and these folk-songs, as well as hymns, were heard in Westminster Cathedral after Vespers from Christmas to Epiphany. These good people did not know that carol singing had been silenced only by the sorrow of penal days in England. The custom never died out on the continent.

St. Francis of Assisi has been called the "precursor of the carol." We are quite certain that he, in the thirteenth century, made the first Christmas Crib in order to increase the devotion of his brethren who were adoring the Infant God. After the Midnight Mass the monks composed and sang simple songs about the birth of Christ before the representation of the stable of Bethlehem. St. Bonaventure wrote an account of St. Francis and his model Crib, which has been imitated in every land to perpetuate the joy of the first Christmas:

"Now, three years before his death it befell that he [St. Francis] was minded, at the town of Greccio, to celebrate the memory of the Birth of the Child Jesus,

Christmas Carols

with all the added solemnity that he might, for the kindling of devotion. That this might not seem an innovation, he sought and obtained license from the Supreme Pontiff, and then made ready a manger, and bade hay, together with an ox and an ass, be brought unto the place. The Brethren were called together, the folk assembled, the wood echoed with their voices, and that night was made radiant and solemn with many bright lights, and with tuneful and sonorous praises. The man of God, filled with tender love, stood before the manger, bathed in tears, and overflowing with joy. Solemn Masses were celebrated over the manger, Francis, the Levite of Christ, chanting the Holy Gospel. Then he preached unto the folk standing round, the Birth of the King in poverty, calling Him, when he wished to name Him, the Child of Bethlehem, by reason of his tender love for Him. A certain knight, valorous and true, Messer John of Greccio, who for the love of Christ had left the secular army, and was bound by closest friendship unto the man of God, declared that he beheld a little Child right fair to see sleeping in that manger, Who seemed to be awakened from sleep when the blessed Father Francis embraced him in both arms. This vision of the knight is rendered worthy of belief, not alone through the holiness of him that beheld it, but is also confirmed by the truth that it set forth, and withal proven by the miracles that followed it. For the example of Francis, if meditated upon by the world, must needs stir up sluggish hearts unto the faith of Christ, and the hay that was kept

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back from the manger by the folk proved a marvelous remedy for sick beasts, and a prophylactic against divers other plagues, God magnifying by all means His servant, and making manifest by clear and miraculous portents the efficacy of his holy prayers."

It is possible, even probable, that religious women long before the thirteenth century made in their convents a simple representation of the Manger around which they gathered after Midnight Mass to increase their devotion to the Sacred Infancy and to give vent to their love in pious carols. This welcoming of the Divine Babe is today an established custom in many Religious Orders. We have a carol of this type which was composed by St. Ita as early as the sixth century. It is called "Jesukin"—Little Jesus.

Jesukin
Lives my little cell within;
What were wealth of cleric high—
All is lie but Jesukin.

Nursling nurtured, as 'tis right,
Harbors here no servile spright,
Jesu of the skies, who art
Next my heart through every night.

Jesukin, my good for aye,
Calling and will not have nay,
King of all things, ever true,
He shall have me who will away.

Jesu, more than angel aid,
Fosterling not formed to fade,

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Nursed by me in desert wild,
Jesu, Child of Judah's Maid.

Sons of kings and kingly kin
To my land may enter in;
Guest of none I hope to be
Save of Thee, my Jesukin.

Unto heaven's High King confest
Sing a chorus, maidens blest!
He is o'er us, though within
Jesukin is on our breast.

“The Three Kings’ Song” was a popular lullaby sung by pious mothers to their own little ones at Epiphany.

The Magi came out of the Orient land,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babie!
They rode over rock, and they rode over sand,
Right glad then were those three.

And as they went riding, a star went before,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babie!
The form of a glorious Infant it bore,
Right glad then were these three.

And when to Jerusalem city they came,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babie!
They saw not the star with its glorious flame,
How sad then were those three.

And as they were sitting at dinner one day,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babie!
An angel of heaven appeared and did say,
Right glad then were those three.

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"Go, Magi, once more from the town to the wild,"
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babiel
"For Herod is seeking the life of the Child,"
How sad then were those three.

But when from the city they hastened in fear,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babiel
The star went before shining brightly and clear,
Right glad then were those three.

They came to the stable at Bethlehem town,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babiel
They poured out their treasures and lowly kneeled down,
Right glad then were those three.

For there in the stable, enthroned on the knee,
Now rockabye, rockabye, pretty babiel
Of Mary, the Virgin, Messiah they see,
Right glad then were those three.

Fra Angelico, in one of his lovely paintings, represented the little angels dancing in a ring to show their joy. Fra Jacopone da Todi has, with like simplicity, written a charming carol, "The Little Angels."

The little angels join their hands
And dance in holy rings.
Love-songs they're whispering,
The little angel bands.

Good men and bad they call and greet;
High glory doffs its crown,
And has come down,
Low lies there at your feet.

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Now, shamefaced boors, why keep
Ye back? Show courtesie.

Hasten and ye will see
The little Jesus sleep.

The earth and all the skiey space
Break into flowery smiles,
So draws and so beguiles
The sweetness of His face.

“The Star Song” by Robert Herrick, a poet of the seventeenth century, was a carol that was sung with great ceremony to the king at Whitehall during the festivities of Twelfth-tide.

GUESTS

Tell us, thou clear and heavenly tongue,
Where is the Babe but lately sprung?
Lies He the lily-banks among?

Or say, if this new Birth of ours
Sleeps, laid within some ark of flowers,
Spangled with dewlight; thou canst clear
All doubts, and manifest the where.

Declare to us, bright Star, if we shall seek
Him in the morning's blushing cheek,
Or search the beds of spices through,
To find Him out.

THE STAR

No, this ye need not do;
But only come and see Him rest
A Princely Babe in's mother's breast.

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Chorus

He's seen, He's seen! why then around,
Let's kiss the sweet and holy ground;
And all rejoice that we have found
A King before conception crown'd.

GUESTS

Come then, come then, and let us bring
Unto our pretty Twelfth-tide King
Each one his several offering;

Chorus

And when night comes we'll give Him wassailing;
And that His treble honors may be seen,
We'll choose Him King, and make His mother Queen.

Jacopone da Todi was probably the first writer of real carols to be sung and played outside the church by groups of singers and pipers who went through towns and villages filling the air with their quaint and joyous melodies. From Italy this Catholic custom spread to other European countries where the carols took different forms at different times according to the special traits of each race.

Carols were popular in England and France during the fifteenth century although frequently they were rather boisterous drinking-songs. "A Sailor's Carol" will give you an idea of the style of many of the old carols which, take notice, always united devotion with good cheer. The word *Noël* means *good news*.

Christmas Carols

Noël! Noël! Noël! Noël!
A Catholic tale have I to tell:
And a Christmas song have I to sing
While all the bells in Arundel ring.

I pray good beef and I pray good beer
This holy night of all the year.
But I pray detestable drink for them
That give no honor to Bethlehem.

The following is an example of a traditional wassail, or welcoming song, that must have made many a humble home happy.

I

Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wand'ring,
So fair to be seen,

Chorus

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you, and send you
A happy new year,
And God send you a happy new year.

II

We are not daily beggars
That beg from door to door,
But we are neighbors' children
Whom you have seen before.

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III

Good Master and Mistress
As you sit by the fire,
Pray think of us poor children
Who wander in the mire.

IV

God bless the master of this house,
Likewise the mistress too;
And all the little children
That round the table go.

To Padraic Gregory we are indebted for a famous carol which is typical of the spirit of the common people during the Middle Ages. Not hampered by politics, nor burdened with too much book learning, they liked innocent fun and good eating. In the midst of their Christmas feasting, however, they did not forget to thank God for having sent to earth the Cause of their joy—the Infant Saviour. To them there was no irreverence in using the name of Christ with knight and squire and churl, or even with the good things they were about to eat: boar's-head, roasted quail, etc., etc.

A CHURL'S SONG OF CHRISTMAS

TOMORROW will be Christ's birthday,
And we, poor churls, will all make gay
And spend our Yuletide gaily;
Nor out to plow the gafol plot,
Or thatch the barley-ricks, I wot,
Or sweat as we do daily,

Christmas Carols

Or mast the hogs, or bank the ditch,
Or skin the beeves, or salt the flitch,

Or in the barths go redding;
But we the tegs will fastle fast,
Well-foddered, and till Yule is past
Toll none in tower or steading.

And so, I prithee, merrie be
In joy of Christ's Nativitie;
And wassail, wassail, wassail sing
In honor of our Lord and King.

And when the sacring-bell hath rung
And when the priest his Mass hath sung
A-down to board we'll frolic;
And when our lord hath ta'en his place,
And good Friar Anslem's mumbled "Grace,"
In meat and mead we'll rollick.

And knight and squire, and clerk and priest,
And churl, and wight, and wench will feast,

On what their eyes may hap on—
For there'll be boar's head, roasted quail,
Plum-porridge, veal, and sweetened ale,
And mallard, goose, and capon.

And so I prithee, merrie be
In joy of Christ's Nativitie;
And wassail, wassail, wassail sing
In honor of our Lord and King.

And, after meat, the minstrel-mimes
Will troll for us their merrie rhymes,
And we will romp and revel,
And 'plaud buffoons and jugglers too.
And cozen with the wenches who
Will kiss without a cavil;

Bethlehem Nights

The mummers we will jape and cheer,
We'll bourd, and bawl, and sing, nor fear
The frown of lord or neighbor,
And we will carol joyfulie
To merrie song and melodie
Of flagelot and tabor.
And so, I prithee, merrie be
In joy of Christ's Nativitie;
And wassail, wassail, wassail sing
In honor of our Lord and King.

And yet, from dawn till even-dim,
Our chiefest thoughts shall be of Him
Whom God the Father gave us,
Who came to this bleak earth to live,
His Heart's most precious Blood to give,
And from the Pit to save us.
And so, at times, we'll pause from play
And sign the Cross and lowly pray
To Christ, the swaddled Stranger,
Who blest mankind that Christmas morn
When He, all houseless and forlorn,
Lay shivering in a manger.
And so, I prithee, pray with me
In joy of Christ's Nativitie;
And wassail, wassail, wassail sing
In honour of our Lord and King.

Probably the best-known, and the best-liked, of the old English carols is "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen." We smile when we hear it started at a Christmas entertainment, but we are glad to listen to it once more. One never tires of an old friend.

Christmas Carols

God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem in Jury
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger,
Upon this blessed morn;
The which his Mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn:
O tidings, etc.

From God our heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name:
O tidings, etc.

"Fear not," then said the Angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour,
Of virtue, power, and might;
So frequently to vanquish all
The fiends of Satan quite."
O tidings, etc.

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The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding,
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
This Blessed Babe to find.
O tidings, etc.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereas this infant lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His Mother Mary kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray;
O tidings, etc.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface:
O tidings, etc.

SIXTH NIGHT

Favors of the Infant Jesus

Favors of the Infant Jesus

ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

ST. CATHERINE, destined to become a Christian martyr in the fourth century, was the daughter of noble pagan parents who lived in Egypt when that country was subject to Rome. It is said that at Catherine's birth a bright light was seen to play around her head, and that at the early age of fourteen she was renowned throughout Egypt for her extraordinary wisdom.

Because Catherine was beautiful as well as amiable and learned, many noble youths sought her hand in marriage; but she would have none of them. One day when a group of courtiers tried to persuade her to accept the hand of one who could lead them in war she asked, "What kind of man would you have me marry?" one of the nobles answered:

"Madam, everyone knows that you have four great gifts. First, you are of most noble blood; second, you have a great inheritance; third, you surpass all persons living in knowledge; and fourth, you are very beautiful."

"Then," replied Catherine, "if God has given me such gifts, I am the more bound to love Him and please Him, and to value my wisdom and beauty,

Bethlehem Nights

and my wealth and noble birth. He whom I shall wed must also have four remarkable gifts. He must be of such noble blood that all men will worship him; so rich, that no one can equal him; so beautiful, that the angels will desire to behold him; so magnanimous, that he will forgive all injuries. Find me such a one and I shall gladly espouse him." A holy hermit who dwelt in a desert near Alexandria having convinced Catherine that Jesus Christ alone possessed all these gifts, she became a Christian.

During a great persecution, the Emperor Maximinus visited Alexandria and commanded the Christians to worship the false gods of Rome. Catherine refused, and in presence of the wicked emperor, who was fascinated by her beauty, spoke so eloquently in favor of the true religion that Maximinus was silenced, and fifty of his wisest lawyers were converted to Christianity. They were put to death and Catherine was thrown into a dungeon where angels ministered to her. The empress, filled with admiration for the beautiful courageous maiden, went to her prison, which she found filled with light and fragrant as a flower garden. She and many courtiers were converted.

A still more noble queen came to console the faithful Catherine before she was beheaded. Our Lady appeared with the Divine Infant in her arms and invited the virgin to approach. Little Jesus smiled sweetly and placed a ring on Catherine's finger to show that He was willing to espouse her. He alone

Favors of the Infant Jesus

could satisfy her noble ambition. He alone possessed the gifts she demanded.

We learn from tradition that St. Catherine was fastened to a spiked wheel, which broke without torturing her delicate body. Her head was then struck off, and she was carried by angels to be buried on Mount Sinai in Arabia. The Infant Jesus did not allow the hand of man to touch His chaste Spouse. St. Catherine, it is said, had asked Him for this great favor.

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA

We are quite familiar with the statue of St. Anthony of Padua. We find it in almost every church we enter, and so extraordinary is the devotion of Italians to this favorite saint that everyone thinks he was born in Italy. This is not the case. He came of a noble Portuguese family thought to be descended from the great crusader Godefroy de Bouillon. He was christened *Ferdinand*, but when he grew up and entered the Religious Order founded by St. Francis of Assisi, he was called Brother Anthony. He had been educated at the University of Padua, a city in Italy. Later he preached and worked so many miracles there, that he is generally known as St. Anthony of Padua. He died in 1231 being then only thirty-six years old.

St. Anthony loved little children and often thought of God as the Babe of Bethlehem. Perhaps it was this devotion that made him such an attractive saint. Everybody loves the good St. Anthony.

Bethlehem Nights

A beautiful story is told by a gentleman at whose house St. Anthony stopped when he was preaching in that vicinity. "One night," said the gentleman, "as I was passing Brother Anthony's room I noticed a bright light streaming from beneath the door. Overcome by what I hope was a pardonable curiosity, I peeped through a chink in the door, and beheld Brother Anthony on his knees before an open book on which stood a little child of more than earthly beauty. The child put his tiny arms around Brother Anthony's neck, and seemed as pleased to be caressed by him as were the poor, dirty youngsters whom the holy Friar often pressed to his heart when they clung to him on the streets of the town. I knew that I had seen the Divine Child. When He disappeared, Brother Anthony continued praying until I entered the room and confessed my fault—if fault it was. The only penance exacted of me was a promise to say nothing about the wonder until after Brother Anthony's death. I have kept my promise."

BLESSED HERMAN JOSEPH

The Infant Jesus undoubtedly rewards every act of homage paid His Blessed Mother, but He seems to reward most promptly every sign of love shown her by little children who generally expect to receive marks of kindness rather than to give them.

One unselfish little boy lived in the great city of Cologne many years ago. He had a pious mother, who taught him his catechism and told him beautiful

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stories about the Child of Bethlehem and His beautiful mother. A great love for the Madonna sprang up in the pure heart of little Herman. When he was lonely because his poor mother had to go out to work so that she could buy food for her little son and herself, he would run to the church and talk to the lovely Madonna there, and he felt happy again.

Often Herman saw people putting flowers and lights on the Lady-altar, and he wished he could do the same. He knew his mother was poor; so he would not ask her for money. One day as he talked to the Heavenly Mother, he thought of the lovely red apple in his pocket that was to be his dinner that day. "Perhaps," he said to himself, "the Madonna would like to have this for her baby." Then placing the tempting apple on the altar, he begged the beautiful Lady to take this since he had no money, and offer it as his gift for her Holy Child. Immediately the Madonna bent over, took the precious gift and gave it to her little Son. That day Herman needed no dinner. He was too happy.

A short time after this great favor as little Herman was hastening to the church, he saw coming toward him the Madonna with her lovely Babe in her arms. Both smiled at him; and the Lady said in a voice of heavenly sweetness: "Why are you barefooted this cold morning, little boy?"

"Because my mother has no money to buy me shoes," was the answer.

"See that flat stone," said the Blessed Mother with a glance of pity at the child's feet purple with cold.

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“Lift it, and you will find money for a pair of shoes.” The child obeyed and found several silver coins. Looking up to thank his benefactress, Herman could not see her, so he ran quickly into the church and there she was smiling at him as usual. She told him that he would always find money under the stone whenever he wanted anything that was really necessary, like food or clothing for himself or his mother.

Once when Herman went to tell the Madonna how he had been ill-treated by some jealous boys, he saw her high up near a tribune in the church. With her were two boys—little Jesus and His cousin, St. John. Herman suddenly felt himself near them. Our Lady told him to speak to her Divine Son. He did so, and was gently caressed and comforted by little Jesus.

When Herman was twelve years old, he went to live with some Premonstratensian Fathers. As a religious he led a very holy life, and was often visited and instructed by Our Lady. She bade him take the name of Joseph and to imitate the fidelity and industry of the beloved Foster-Father of the Infant Jesus.

CHRISTMAS VISITS

St. Catherine of Bologna had sacrificed for love of the Infant Jesus not only her rank in the world, but also her great wealth to become a Franciscan nun. She founded a house of her Order at Bologna and became the Abbess. Though head of the house, she despised all honors, and found her delight in per-

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forming the hardest tasks. She was remarkable for her care of the altar, which, she knew, was a perpetual Bethlehem—a House of Bread. The Divine Babe rewarded her love and zeal by performing many miracles in her honor.

One cold Christmas Eve after all her Sisters had left the chapel, she remained to welcome the Infant God at midnight. Fervently she prayed and meditated. Suddenly, she beheld in vision Our Blessed Lady radiantly beautiful and holding the Divine Child in her arms. She approached Catherine and gave her the smiling Babe to hold. Gently He pressed His face to Catherine's and kissed her. To this day the red mark left by those baby lips remains on the saint's face; her entire body remains incorrupt.

St. Felix of Cantalice was a great lover of little children. This charming characteristic was, undoubtedly, the result—perhaps the reward—of his remarkable devotion to the Sacred Infancy of our Divine Lord. Felix was a poor little shepherd boy; but so gentle and obliging was he, that he won the love of his rough associates and had great influence over them.

When Felix was twenty years old, he became a Capuchin monk and was sent to Rome where he begged alms for the poor at the time of a great famine in that city. Of course, he was very tired at night; yet when the other monks went to rest, Felix stayed in the church, because he could not bear to think that there was no one there to talk to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

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One Christmas Eve while he was watching alone before the Crib of the little Babe of Bethlehem whom he loved most tenderly, the Blessed Mother appeared to him and placing her beautiful Infant in his arms said: "Hold Him, and caress Him, Felix. He loves you because you love the poor for His sake." Contentedly the Holy Child remained with the happy saint until His Mother came to claim her precious Child.

To hold the Infant Jesus seems to be the special privilege of the saints who have an extraordinary devotion to the Mother of God, or who love little children and the poor. St. Cajetan was another of these favored saints. The very moment he was born his pious mother dedicated him to the Blessed Virgin. As a tiny child he would deprive himself of his own food in order that it might be given to some hungry little one. As a man, he spent his money building hospitals, which he filled with the sick poor. He himself waited on the plague-stricken victims. He joined a Society of priests called Theatines. It was St. Cajetan who instituted the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that we call "The Forty Hours' Devotion." No wonder that, as he was adoring the Infant Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament one Christmas Eve, Our Lady went to the spot where Cajetan was kneeling and placed the Divine Babe in his arms. Neither God nor His Blessed Mother will ever be outdone in generosity.

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DEATH-BED VISITS

The vestibule of man's eternal home is on earth, and the most important moment of one's stay in that vestibule is the moment of leaving it to take possession of bliss or woe according to the state of one's immortal soul at that moment. Fortunate, then, are those who have merited the special help of the Mother of God and her Divine Son at that all-important moment. St. Alexis Falconieri was one of the few thus visibly favored. He and six companions as devout as himself were together reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin on the feast of her Assumption. Suddenly, Our Lady appeared before them and told them that she wished them to give up their possessions and serve the poor so dear to her Divine Son. The young men gladly obeyed the Queen of Heaven and founded the Order known as "The Servites," or Servants of Mary.

Alexis lived to be one hundred and ten years old. On his death bed the Blessed Virgin appeared to comfort him. The Holy Babe of Bethlehem also appeared surrounded by a flock of pure white doves. He blessed Alexis and placed a wreath of flowers from Paradise on the head of His faithful servant who had so often sung the praises of His Blessed Mother.

Wonderful to relate, a niece of St. Alexis received a similar favor when dying. The father of St. Juliana was a brother of Alexis. He was a man of the business world not remarkable for sanctity as were his brother

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and daughter; however, he was noble enough to repair an act of injustice by publicly declaring his fault in the Cathedral of Florence.

Juliana showed signs of sanctity from her earliest years. At fourteen she refused to marry, saying that she would have no spouse but the Divine Babe of Bethlehem. She with others formed the beginning of the Order of the Mantellate.

Juliana saw in everyone she served the Infant Jesus; so every task was to her a real delight. When she was dying Our Lord appeared to her as a beautiful Child and crowned her with celestial flowers. He did still more for His loving spouse. She was not able to receive Holy Communion, but was privileged to have the Sacred Host placed on a corporal, laid over her heart. When Juliana died, the Host disappeared. Later, her Sisters found on her virginal body the form of the Sacred Host just where it had been placed by the priest who attended her.

We have seen that St. Cajetan had, one Christmas Eve, been permitted by the Mother of God to hold and caress her Holy Babe. This was not the only favor which this saint received through the graciousness of his heavenly Queen. It is said that at his death she appeared in great splendor surrounded by Seraphim. In rapture St. Cajetan cried out, "Lady, bless me." The Blessed Virgin replied: "Receive the blessing of my Son. I am here as a reward for the sincerity of thy love. My Son calls thee. Let us go in peace."

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VENERABLE URSULA BENICASA

After a childhood of want and suffering, an orphan girl of Naples named Ursula attempted to support a brother, a sister, and herself by weaving. This she did until the death of her brother, then she made her home in a mountain cave. Love of the Blessed Virgin kept her happy, and made her zealous for the spread of devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. Through Ursula's efforts a church was built in Naples in honor of this great mystery. Of course, Little Jesus did not let such love for His Blessed Mother go unrewarded.

One year, on the feast of the Purification, as Ursula was praying before a statue of Our Lady, she saw the Madonna standing before her holding the Divine Infant in her arms. The Virgin Mother wore a white robe over which hung a lovely blue mantle. Approaching Ursula, Our Lady said: "Listen to what my Jesus and yours will say to you."

The Holy Child, smiling sweetly, said: "I wish you, my faithful Ursula, to found an order of nuns to honor my Mother. This new order will be of great benefit to the Faithful."

Ursula humbly accepted the sublime commission through obedience to the will of the Infant God who would Himself, she knew, supply for all her deficiencies. She did not trust in her own powers; therefore she founded—without fear or hesitation—the "Nuns of the Immaculate Conception," giving them

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a blue and white habit in honor of Our Lady whom she asked to be their real Mother.

Venerable Ursula Benicasa, wishing to help those who could not become religious, asked our Lord for some favor which would in a way replace the blue and white habit of her Order. In reply the gracious Babe of Bethlehem let her see in vision myriads of angels scattering little blue and white scapulars over the earth. This was the origin of the richly indulgenced Blue Scapular.

We like to think that it was by special inspiration that the Church decided to keep the feast of Ursula Benicasa on December eight, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady.

ST. TERESA AND COMPANIONS

The Great St. Teresa—so called to distinguish her from Little St. Thérèse of Lisieux—left as a precious heirloom to the Carmelite Order a remarkable devotion to the Sacred Infancy of Our Divine Lord. She and her first helpers in the great reform effected by her must have lived on very close terms with Little Jesus—if we are to judge by the stories related by the biographers of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and the Ven. Anne of Jesus.

We read that one day as St. Teresa was descending a staircase of her monastery, she saw with great astonishment, a beautiful little boy coming toward her. "Why, where did you come from, dear child?" Teresa asked. "Who are you?"

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In tones sweeter than any earthly music the child answered, "I will tell you that when you tell me who you are."

Teresa said, "I am Sister Teresa of Jesus."

"And I," the Child replied, "am Jesus of Sister Teresa."

Great reverence for pictures and statues of the Holy Child was a characteristic virtue of the zealous Foundress. She always carried a little statue about her. When traveling with her Sisters, she would place it before them as an aid to recollection at meditation time. Undoubtedly, the figure of the Infant Jesus gave pious thoughts to some of their traveling companions as well as to the nuns themselves. A few scoffers there may have been but the devout religious took no offense; they only prayed for the conversion of the poor people.

A sub-prioress under St. Teresa—the Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus—took great pains to instruct the young Carmelite novices in regard to the value of a sincere, childlike devotion to the Holy Child. On the altar in the novitiate, she placed a statue of the Infant Jesus; and soon the fervent young religious vied with one another in honoring it by little practices of piety. Of this sweet custom a little novice wrote: "Every day I carried a bunch of flowers to Little Jesus, and this is the way I made my bouquet: I put in some red flowers to express my love for suffering and to do that which was hardest in community life; I placed some white flowers in it to show my love of purity, and that the love of God would

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precede every other attachment; I put in some yellow flowers to signify that I deeply regretted the offenses against Almighty God; some blue flowers were there too, representing my tears for the conversion of sinners. Whenever I came with that bouquet, the Divine Child took it from my hand, and offered it to His eternal Father."

Let those who feel inclined to laugh at such simplicity recall the words of Our Divine Saviour: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

St. John of the Cross is rightly styled the father of the reform of the Discalced Carmelites in Spain as St. Teresa is its mother. Both, undoubtedly, worked wonders through their sincere devotion to the Infant Jesus. St. John saw Him especially in the Blessed Sacrament. Often those assisting at the saint's Mass noticed that he was surrounded by a bright light at the Consecration, and that he evidently found it almost impossible to proceed with the Holy Sacrifice.

A biographer of St. John of the Cross has given us the following account of the saint's ingenuity in providing for his brothers holy recreation on the festival of the Nativity of Christ.

With the same devotion with which he offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass and venerated the divine mysteries, St. John of the Cross also celebrated the feasts and solemnities of the sacred humanity of Christ, and very specially his birthday at Christmas. During this festival he did not permit elaborately

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prepared performances, because they occasion distractions rather than devout and holy recreation. But he made much of improvised dramatics, as, for example, on one occasion he distributed some of his friars through the cloisters of the convent to represent the householders of Bethlehem, while two of the religious, adjusting their habits without the aid of secular ornament, played the part of the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph trying to find a lodging. The saint himself went with them and asked lodging for the guests, and when he approached one of the houses and saw the doors shut against the son of God in the womb of the holy Virgin, his eloquence was great in representing the merits of the holy family, reprimanding the hardness of the innkeepers, complaining most lovingly with the eternal Father for consenting to such things, and consoling the holy Virgin and St. Joseph in such great trouble. His arguments were so sweet and affectionate that the religious burst into tears and there was no heart so hard as not to respond with lively sympathy.

Next day St. John dramatized the Child already born, with whom he entertained himself in heavenly conversation. On one of these occasions he was filled with such impetuous feelings of joy that he went to a table on which a statue of the Infant Jesus was placed and, taking it in his arms, began to dance with such great fervor that he seemed to be out of his mind. In comparison with the habitual modesty and calmness of the holy man this was very strange to his

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brethren. Then in the midst of these joys, he burst out singing,

Mi dulce y tierno Jesus,
Si amores me han de matar,
Ahora tienen lugar.

Absorbed in the sweetness of this mystery and the love of the Infant Jesus, his face glowed cheerfully as if it were inflamed with the divine love.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

From her earliest years, Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin—the *Little Flower*—loved in a very special manner the Holy Child Jesus. We were not surprised, therefore, when we read in her Autobiography that she desired to have His sweet name added to her own on her entrance into religion. This desire only Little Jesus knew; yet when Thérèse paid her first visit to her sister Pauline at the Carmel at Lisieux, the Reverend Mother said to her: “When you come to us, little one, you will be called ‘Teresa of the Child Jesus.’ ”

The Little Flower gives the following touching account of what took place after she had told her good father of her longing to be a religious.

“We walked about for a long time; my heart was lightened, and Papa no longer shed tears. He spoke to me as Saints speak, and showed me some flowers growing in the low stone wall. Picking one of them,

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he gave it to me, and explained the loving care with which God had made it spring up and grow till now.

"I fancied myself listening to my own story, so close was the resemblance between the little flower and little Thérèse. I received this floweret as a relic, and noticed that in gathering it my father had pulled it up by the roots without breaking them; it seemed destined to live on, but in other and more fertile soil. Papa had just done the same for me. He allowed me to leave the sweet valley, where I had passed the first years of my life, for the mountain of Carmel. I fastened my little white flower to a picture of Our Lady of Victories—the Blessed Virgin smiles on it, and the Infant Jesus seems to hold it in His hand. It is there still, but the stalk is broken close to the root. God doubtless wishes me to understand that He will soon break all the earthly ties of His Little Flower and will not leave her to wither on this earth."

The life of Little St. Thérèse was not, as many people think, all rapture and consolation. She suffered much in a way that but few can understand. Her intimacy with the Divine Child, however, was all sweetness. To His Little Flower He was not only kind but also condescending, gratifying even childish desires on several occasions. Thérèse loved to recall the miracle of her clothing day. She had always been very fond of snow and since she was to receive the habit of a Carmelite in January she hoped that the ground would be as white as her bridal robe. Alas! the weather was as mild as on a spring day, but her

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beloved Infant King did not allow Thérèse to be disappointed. The moment the young novice entered the enclosure when the ceremonies in the public chapel were over, her eyes fell on the statue of the Child Jesus smiling on her amid the flowers and lights; turning towards the quadrangle, she saw that it was covered with the longed-for snow. "What a delicate attention on the part of Jesus," she exclaimed. "Gratifying the least wish of His little Spouse, He even sent her this. Where is the creature so mighty that He can make one flake of it fall to please his beloved?" Not without a recompense worthy of a King had the Little Flower loved, and taught others to love, the Holy Child Jesus.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INFANT JESUS

Many miracles have been attributed to devotion shown to certain pictures and statues of the Infant Jesus. Of the latter, perhaps the most noted is the Infant Jesus of Prague which has a remarkable history. A monastery of Carmelite Fathers was founded by the Emperor Ferdinand II in the city of Prague, the capital of Bohemia. To this monastery came a princess one day to present a statue of the Infant Jesus which represented the Holy Child standing, His right hand raised in benediction. In His left hand He held a gilded globe, an image of the world. The princess had placed on the statue a beautiful dress and cape which she herself had made of cloth of gold. In offering her precious gift she said: "I give you, my dear

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Fathers, something that I prize highly; honor this statue and you will want for nothing." The Carmelites did their part and many miracles were wrought. In order to spread the devotion, a chapel was built for the statue in 1655. Since that year replicas of the Infant Jesus of Prague have been made in almost every country, and countless blessings have followed the devotions reverently made before them.

A citizen of Prague who had long been very careless in regard to religion, went one day merely through curiosity to see the statue so much talked about. To his astonishment he saw only the robe of the Infant. He waited and looked again, but could see neither hands nor face. "I will go to confession," he said to himself, "my sins have blinded me." He followed the good inspiration, confessed with true sorrow, and returned to the statue. He could then see the beautiful face and hands. But alas! after a few minutes they were no longer visible to him. He carefully examined his conscience and found that in his haste he had forgotten something of very great importance. Returning at once to the confessional, he made everything right. After that his vision of the statue was complete.

Some thieves, who entered a boarding school in the United States one night in search of money, would be astonished if they were told that instead of the few pennies that they had found in the office of the portress, they might have had a valuable diamond ring which they had passed and re-passed in a

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corridor leading to the chapel. The diamond was shining on a finger of a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague to Whom both Sisters and pupils had great devotion, and from Whom they received many favors: hiding His ring from the thieves was one of them.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur treasure at the Mother House a picture of the Infant Jesus which for many years hung in the room of their Blessed Foundress, and before which she often sought the help and comfort of the Divine Child. A solemn novena made before this picture by her and six of the oldest Sisters of the community settled all doubts concerning the advisability of transferring the Mother House from France to Belgium. It was while praying earnestly before the Blessed Sacrament on the eve of the Epiphany, 1809, that Blessed Julie felt inspired to confide the question to the Infant Jesus. On the fifth day of the novena she was filled with consolation the source of which could be inferred from her remarks to Mère Blin de Bourbon, the co-foundress. "I have no shadow of anxiety left," she said, "I am in perfect peace. The Child Jesus has taken us under His protection; He will deliver us."

In gratitude for that remarkable protection, the Sisters of Notre Dame have kept alive the devotion to the Infant Jesus bequeathed to them by their Mother. Every year, around the Crib, a fervent novena is made by the Sisters of every house of the Institute. Before the opening of school a statue of the Holy Child is carried in procession through the class-

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rooms; and on the twenty-fifth of each month, the Infant God is specially honored by teachers and pupils. Barren and cold would many a primary school become if deprived of the presence of *Little Jesus*.

SEVENTH NIGHT

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

WHOLLY devotional were most of the Latin poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Fra Jacopone da Todi addressed a lovely one to the Virgin Mother whom he saw, with the eyes of faith, standing with St. Joseph gazing in blissful awe at the Divine Child lying on His manger bed:—

Full of joy His beauteous Mother
Stood beside our new-born Brother
Who was cradled in the hay;
And her spirit's exultation
Thrilled her frame with sweet elation,
To behold Him where He lay.

Christ she saw, in wintry weather,
Housed with ox and ass together,
For His sinful human race:
Saw His creatures bend before Him
Wailful Sweetening!—to adore Him
In His lowly lodging-place.

Compassing the crib completely,
Angels many sang full sweetly
Their unmeasurable joy.
Where an old man with the Maiden
Silent stood, their hearts o'erladen
Wondering o'er her wondrous Boy.

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Mother mine! this favor do me:
Let His pain, gone through and through me,
Rest implanted in my heart:
Of the pangs that in the manger
Lay for earth's celestial Stranger
Let me bear, like thee, my part.

Yield me of thy Babe fruition,
And my exile's one ambition
Be, like thine, to hold Him fast:
Spread throughout the world such longing,
And when souls to Him come thronging,
Let mine be at least the last.

Virgin of all virgins, take me
Into grace again, and make me
Catch thy Baby to my breast:
Let me bear thy beauteous Burden,
Born that, life's immortal guerdon,
Dying, He from death should wrest.

The Protestant Reformation—Revolution, rather—crushed the spirit of joy, and silenced the carols during the sixteenth century. However, many faithful Catholics never wholly lost their cheerfulness during the terrible persecutions of that century. They made a crib of their hearts and kept Little Jesus there warming Him with their love even while suffering torments in loathsome prisons. Of course, their Divine Guest made His faithful ones so happy that they were glad to suffer for His sake. Remember what we read in the "Following of Christ." Thomas à Kempis says: "When Jesus is present, all goes well." I must not say, then, that there were no carols sung

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during the days of persecution. They were not heard on the mountains tops nor in the village streets, but they were heard by the King of Kings in the hearts that loved Him.

Robert Southwell, a poet and priest who was martyred in 1594, he being then only thirty-three years old, wrote a now famous Christmas poem entitled "The Burning Babe":—

As I in hoary Winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart
to glow;

And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright, did in the air appear;
Who, scorched with exceeding heat, such floods of tears
did shed,

As though His floods should quench His flames with
what His tears were fed;

"Alas!" quoth He, "but newly born in fiery heats of fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel My fire
but I!

My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel, wounding
thorns;

Love is the fire and sighs the smoke, the ashes, shame
and scorns;

The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals;
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled
souls;

For which, as now on fire I am, to work them to their
good,

So will I melt into a bath, to wash them in My blood:"
With this He vanish'd out of sight, and swiftly shrunk
away,

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And straight I callèd unto mind that it was Christmas-day.

“The Burning Babe” is a good poem, but some young people find it difficult to grasp the author’s meaning. They find Southwell’s “New Prince, New Pomp” easier.

Behold a silly tender babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
Alas! a piteous sight.

The inns are full, no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed;
But forced He is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud His head.

Despise Him not for lying there,
First what He is enquire;
An oriental pearl is often found
In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not His crib, His wooden dish,
Nor beasts that by Him feed;
Weigh not His mother’s poor attire,
Nor Joseph’s simple weed.

This stable is a prince’s court,
The crib His chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of His pomp,
The wooden dish His plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince Himself is come from heaven,
This pomp is praised there.

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

With joy approach, O Christian wight!
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise this humble pomp
Which He from heaven doth bring.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, there was born to Puritan parents a poet who was to become a fervent Catholic and the inspiration of religious poets even down to our own day. This gifted lover of the Infant King was Richard Crashaw. He did not attempt to revive the true carol—the days of spontaneous joy had vanished—but he wrote exquisite devotional verse. His “Hymn as Sung by the Shepherds” is really sublime. The chorus runs:

Welcome, all Wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in Winter. Day in Night.
Heaven in Earth, and God in Man.
Great little One! Whose all-embracing birth
Lifts Earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to Earth.

We should be great theologians if we understood these lines as the author did. Could any salutation surpass “Great little One”? Let us use it often in our visits to the Crib; it will increase our faith.

Another seventeenth century poet, the Honorable Patrick Carey, was urged by human pity rather than by personal joy to write the following lines when he contemplated the suffering of the little Babe in the Cave of Bethlehem. The title of the poem is “Christ in the Cradle.”

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Look, how He shakes for cold!
How pale His lips are grown!
Wherein His limbs to fold
Yet mantle has He none.
His pretty feet and hands
(Of late more pure and white
Than is the snow
That pains them so)
Have lost their color quite.
His lips are blue
Where roses grew,
He's frozen everywhere.
All the heat He has
Joseph, alas!
Gives in a groan; or Mary in a tear.

From the eighteenth century to the twentieth tender, dignified hymns were more popular than the gay carol. The soul-stirring "Adeste Fidelis" was written in France about the year 1700. I believe the author is unknown; although some declare that St. Bonaventure wrote the words of the beautiful hymn of which there are at least forty translations. The following is that of Canon Oakley:—

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born, the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

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God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb!
Very God,
Begotten, not created;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels;
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above;
"Glory to God,
All glory in the highest!"
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesu, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Another general favorite is "Silent Night"—beautiful in English, still more beautiful in German, as all can aver who have heard it sung by Madame Schumann-Heink, or by the soldiers during the few peaceful moments of the World War. We are indebted to the N. C. W. C. News Service for an inter-

Bethlehem Nights

esting account of the origin and wide distribution of the world famous "Silent Night, Holy Night":—

This beautiful hymn was composed in Oberndorf, Austria. The date, authorities tell us, was Christmas Eve, 1818. The words are a poem of which the pastor of the local church is said to have been the author. Wishing to have a new hymn with which to welcome the Christ Child to the world on Christmas, the pastor, the story says, called upon his friend, Franz Gruber, who was organist at the church, to set his poem to music. Gruber set to work on Christmas Eve, and completed the music in time to have it sung in the church that night.

The story of how this beautiful hymn first came to the attention of the outside world is also interesting. The organ in the church had broken down, and a repairman came to Oberndorf to fix it. He was working on the organ on Christmas Eve, and heard the hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night" being rehearsed. Struck with the beauty of the hymn, he carried it home with him, and soon afterwards it spread to other parts of Europe and then to the world.

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar;
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh'!
Schlafe in himmlischer Ruh'!

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Hirten erst kund gemacht,
Durch der Engel Alleluja,

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

Tönt es laut von fern und nah':
Jesus, der Retter, ist da!
Jesus, der Retter, ist da!

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus Deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da uns schlägt die rettende Stund',
Jesus in Deiner Geburt!
Jesus in Deiner Geburt!

Although we agree with the critics who declare that "Father Faber's poetry is prose and his prose is poetry," we love some of his hymns—those that are so sincere and touching that one forgets what technique means—if one ever knew. Do we ever tire of reciting or singing that fervent convert's "Christmas Night"? The lines are not labored. They are the spontaneous outpouring of a soul filled with faith, and love, and joy.

At last Thou art come, little Saviour!
And Thine angels fill midnight with song;
Thou art come to us, gentle Creator!
Whom Thy creatures have sighed for so long.
All hail, Eternal Child!
Dear Mary's little Flower,
God hardly born an hour,
Sweet Babe of Bethlehem!
Hail Mary's Little One,
Hail God's Eternal Son,
Sweet Babe of Bethlehem,
Sweet Babe of Bethlehem!

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Thou art come to Thy Beautiful Mother;
She hath looked on Thy marvelous face;
Thou art come to us, Maker of Mary!
And she was Thy channel of grace.
All hail, Eternal Child!

Thou hast brought with Thee plentiful pardon,
And our souls overflow with delight;
Our hearts are half broken, dear Jesus!
With the joy of this wonderful night.
All hail, Eternal Child!

We have waited so long for Thee, Saviour!
Art Thou come to us, dearest! at last?
Oh, bless Thee, dear Joy of Thy Mother!
This is worth all the wearisome past!
All hail, Eternal Child!

Thou art come, Thou art come, Child of Mary!
Yet we hardly believe Thou art come;—
It seems such a wonder to have Thee
New Brother! with us in our home.
All hail, Eternal Child!

Thou wilt stay with us, Master and Maker!
Thou wilt stay with us now evermore:
We will play with Thee, beautiful Brother!
On Eternity's jubilant shore.
All hail, Eternal Child!

If we look for Christmas poetry that can be understood and enjoyed by children, and by enviable grown-ups who have child-like hearts, we can find nothing better than "Little Jesus" by Francis Thompson:—

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

Ex ore infantium Deus et lactentium perfecisti laudem

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!
Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?
And did Thy Mother let Thee spoil
Thy robes, with playing on *our* soil?
How nice to have them always new
In Heaven, because 'twas quite clean blue!

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.

Bethlehem Nights

And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?—

So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say, "O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

St. Alphonsus Liguori has given us a Canticle describing effectively the most peaceful scene in Our Divine Saviour's life on earth—the Virgin Mother gazing upon her Infant Son asleep in her loving arms.

Mary sings—the ravish'd heavens
Hush the music of their spheres;
Soft her voice, her beauty fairer
Than the glancing stars appears:
While to Jesus slumbering nigh,
Thus she sings her lullaby.

The Infant Jesus in Poetry

Sleep, my Babe! my God! my Treasure!

Gently sleep: but ah! the sight
With its beauty so transports me,
I am dying of delight:
Thou canst not thy Mother see,
Yet thou breathest flames to me.

If within your lids unfolded,
Slumbering eyes! you seem so fair;
When upon my gaze you open
How shall I your beauty bear?
Ah! I tremble when you wake,
Lest my heart with love should break.

Cheeks than sweetest roses sweeter,
Mouth where lurks a smile divine—
Though the kiss my Babe should waken,
I must press those lips to mine.
Pardon, Dearest, if I say,
Mother's love will take no nay.

As she ceased, the gentle Virgin
Clasped the Infant to her breast,
And upon his radiant forehead
Many a loving kiss impress'd:
Jesus woke, and on her face
Fixed a look of heavenly grace.

Ah! that look, those eyes, that beauty,
How they pierce the Mother's heart;
Shafts of love from every feature
Through her gentle bosom dart.
Heart of stone! can I behold
Mary's love, and still be cold?

Bethlehem Nights

Where my soul! thy sense, thy reason?

When will these delays be o'er?

All things else, how fair so ever,

Are but smoke:—resist no more!

Yes! 'tis done! I yield my arms

Captive to those double charms.

If, alas, O heavenly beauty!

Now so late those charms I learn,

Now at least, and ever, ever,

With thy love my heart will burn

For the Mother and the Child,

Rose and Lily undefiled.

Plant and fruit, and fruit and blossom,

I am theirs, and they are mine;

For no other prize I labor,

For no other bliss I pine;

Love can every pain requite,

Love alone is full delight.

Some non-Catholic writers who have little regard for the Church—or, rather, for the temporal government of the Church, which they do not understand—have been unable to shake off the spell woven by the beautiful Madonnas of the artistic world, of Rome in particular. In honor of the Divine Child and His dear Mother, some of them have written charming verses in a thoroughly Catholic manner. Here are two stanzas of Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's lengthy poem, "The Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus," the theme of which the writer, probably, found in Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity":

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But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest.

The first stanza of Mrs. Browning's poem recalls the Annunciation.

Sleep, sleep, my Holy One,
My flesh, my Lord!—what name?
I do know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, that is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head,
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.
The dumb kine from their fodder turning them
Softened their horned faces
To almost human gazes
Towards the newly Born.
The simple shepherds from the
Star-lit brooks
Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonished hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue.
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards their gifts upon the ground.
The incense, myrrh and gold,
These baby hands were impotent to hold.

Bethlehem Nights

So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon thy royal state!
Sleep, sleep, my kindly One!

We are proud of the fact that several of our American poets have not left the Infant Jesus out of their songs. Those of Holland and of Longfellow are general favorites. We have time but for one of them. Later, we shall sing:—

There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The word repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And thought how, 'as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

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Then from each black accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearthstones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep,
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

We need not ask when the beautiful poem "Christmas Bells" was written by the beloved American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The line "The cannon thundered in the South" tells that. May we, like the noble Christian poet, appreciate the truths expressed in the last two stanzas. And may we on each recurring Christmas morning of our lives hear the bells ring out:

Bethlehem Nights

God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!

EIGHTH NIGHT
The Infant Jesus in Art

The Infant Jesus in Art

SELDOM have Catholic painters attempted to represent the Infant Jesus without His Blessed Mother—the Madonna. They evidently believed in the truth of the well-known saying: “If you would find Jesus, seek Him in Mary’s arms.” Sculptors and skilled craftsmen, however, have from the earliest Christian ages found inspiration in the Divine Infant alone. On the front wall of a Foundling Hospital in Florence are exquisite medallions of *bambini*, or babies in swaddling clothes, which have reminded countless art lovers of the Babe of Bethlehem, and at the same time have aroused sympathy for the motherless little ones within the hospital. These charming figures in white enamel against a blue background are the work of Andrea della Robbia. They are said to be his first and best-known works.

Art-loving tourists visiting Florence are astonished to find over the door of a small shop in a narrow street a famous lunette made by Luca della Robbia, uncle and master of Andrea. This masterpiece represents the Virgin Mother as a dignified matron. Her Divine Son stands in front of her holding in His left hand a scroll on which are written the words: *Ego sum lux mundi*, I am the light of the world. The Child’s right hand is raised as though in blessing the

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passers-by. Two lovely angels, each holding a vase of lilies, also look interested in the people below. Who would not wish to enter a shop with such an attractive sign! The Robbias, undoubtedly, were devout people whose piety was not displayed in churches only.

I can show you a picture of Little Jesus which I am sure you will all love. It is one of six that Murillo painted for the Hospital de la Caridad at Seville, Spain. A beautiful Child, slightly draped, appears to be standing on the wings of a group of cherubs. In one hand is a small cross; the other is making a pleading gesture while His lovely eyes look up to His Heavenly Father as if imploring Him to aid and comfort the little sufferers of the hospital.

Murillo was not only tender-hearted towards the sick and the poor, he had the courtesy of a gentleman, which made him a welcome guest everywhere. Perhaps his intercourse with the court painter, Velasquez, gave him this pleasing manner. A story is told that illustrates the artist's unwillingness to refuse a request. When Murillo had finished a series of pictures for some Capuchin monks of Seville and was leaving the monastery, the cook who had become greatly attached to him, begged for a small picture as a remembrance. "I would gladly paint something for you," said Murillo, who was grateful for the good care the monk had taken of him, "but I have no canvas." "Here, take this," quickly responded the cook, handing him a table napkin. Amused by his admirer's persistence, Murillo delayed his departure

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for a few hours and painted what is known as "The Madonna of the Napkin." The beautiful Mother is seated on a bench, her arms supporting her Divine Son, who is standing on her lap leaning against her. Both have a look of intense interest in a conversation that seems to be going on before them—we can imagine it to be that of Murillo and the cook.

Another Little Jesus that was painted for the cathedral of Seville, is so beautiful that it was actually stolen. In 1874 a thief cut a square of canvas from a picture called "The Ecstasy of St. Anthony" and carried it to America. When trying to sell this treasure to a New York millionaire, the thief was caught, and Little Jesus was carefully restored to His place in Murillo's masterpiece. In this wonderful picture St. Anthony is shown kneeling on the floor of a room in his monastery. His arms are extended ready to catch the Divine Child, who appears to be sliding down from Heaven encircled by baby angels. A larger angel is looking at the Infant and pointing towards St. Anthony. Perhaps he represents St. Anthony's Guardian Angel asking Jesus to visit the saint.

In at least one of Murillo's pictures, the Madonna occupies an elevated position. She has a motherly form and expression, and her arms are outstretched toward St. Felix of Cantalice who is holding her darling. One can easily imagine that she is saying to the enraptured saint: "Now, please, give me back my Child; you have held Him long enough." St. Felix was one of the special lovers of the Infant Jesus.

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Undoubtedly the most excellent painting of Christ and His Mother from every point of view is Raphael's "Sistine Madonna." The mother is the most unearthly; the Child, the most Divine. In the eyes of both one reads majesty, wisdom, sacrifice. Both appear to be coming from Heaven with a sublime commission from the Eternal Father; both are determined to save mankind. Mother and Son are at the apex of the pyramidal composition, with St. Sixtus and St. Barbara forming the sides. Two lovely cherubs make a connecting link at the base. These look so human one can readily believe that two urchins watching him paint gave Raphael a notion to turn them into angels. Unlike his earlier Madonnas, the Sistine is painted in Raphael's Roman style with dark-haired Mother and Divine Child. We miss the youthful serenity for which Raphael's earlier Madonnas are remarkable. Some attribute the change to the change in the artist himself wrought by too much notice and much work. It may be that our Blessed Lady took him from earth before his beautiful character was wholly spoiled.

It has been proved beyond a doubt that the last Madonna painted by Raphael—"The Gonzaga Madonna"—was found a few years ago, hidden away in a Boston attic. It is still exhibited in the Boylston Street studio of the finder, now deceased. I had the privilege of seeing this Madonna with my own eyes when it was brought to Emmanuel College for a noted Cardinal and some other art critics to pass judgment upon it. The Gonzaga Madonna resembles

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the Sistine in beauty and seriousness. However, the Divine Child has a milder expression in the former. He is clothed, and is resting calmly on His Mother's lap. I have been told that many visitors to the studio where this picture is shown, involuntarily fall on their knees when they see this lovely Madonna and her Divine Child. The drawing and coloring are faultless. I hope this was Raphael's last perfect tribute to the Mother of God whom he must have loved sincerely. He deserves the title given him by his admirers, "Raphael of the Madonnas."

Were I to attempt to describe one tenth of the wonderful group pictures of which Little Jesus is the central figure, I should need three hundred nights instead of twelve. You are familiar with several of the Crib scenes: for example, Correggio's "Holy Night," remarkable for the dazzling light that emanates from the Infant God cradled in His Mother's arms. Even the angels floating above the Holy Family and the shepherds receive their light from the Babe of Bethlehem. To my mind, these rather long-legged spirits are less appropriate for a Crib scene than are the baby angels of Murillo.

In some pictures, the animals are too far away from the Holy Child to produce an impression of keeping Him warm with their breath. Baroccio avoided this criticism in his picture, "The Manger," by having the mouth of an apparently admiring ox almost touch the warm cover that the Blessed Mother had placed over her Child. At first glance, one might think that this picture was one of Correggio's, there is so much

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life and action. All eyes are wide open—even those of Little Jesus and of the ox. Here, as in most of Correggio's Madonnas, the hands are extended with the fingers far apart; other artists have the hands close together unless they are separated to support the Child, as you will notice in Carlo Dolci's "Madonna and Son," a carefully-executed picture in the spiritual style of the devout painter—a would-be imitator of Fra Angelico, as a man, as well as an artist.

Many critics, however, think Carlo Dolci sentimental rather than spiritual, and prefer the more human-looking, chubby Infants of Fra Filippo Lippi and his famous pupil Botticelli. The latter is one of the most important among the fifteenth century artists. His best-known painting is, I believe, "The Madonna of the Magnificat." Should you ever see the original, you may be disappointed; because excessive restoration has spoiled the delicate coloring. Botticelli chose the tondo—circular form—for this masterpiece; and so perfect is the composition and harmony of line, that it has been compared to "the corolla of an open rose." At the right of the picture, our Lady is seated holding her Divine Son on her lap. He is directing His Mother's hand towards a quill pen which an angel is holding near an open book on which one may read the words: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*—My soul doth magnify the Lord. I need not remind you that these are the opening words of our Lady's canticle which we sing at Ves-

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pers; nor tell you why this beautiful picture is called "The Magnificat."

Botticelli's "Nativity" must have had a special significance in the artist's mind since he had an inscription in Greek placed across the top of the panel on which it was painted. Undoubtedly this picture so full of movement and excessive joy was made in an hour of religious fervor. The preaching of Savonarola, the great reformer, had influenced Botticelli as well as many other artists who made a bonfire of their immodest pictures. He has left only the feet of the angels bare. Wise men and shepherds, as well as Savonarola and two other monks who are being embraced by angels in the foreground, are all heavily clad; so, also, is the kneeling Mother adoring the Divine Child, who alone is naked. This beautiful Babe is lying on the floor of the shed holding up His little arms like an ordinary child that is lonesome for its mother. This interesting picture is now in the National Gallery in London. Look for it when you travel, and study every detail. Admire the beauty of the Infant Jesus and the twelve angels in the blue vault above Him. These joyful spirits "dance in a rainbow circle of many-colored floating garments, waving branches of olive and fluttering ribands to which are attached golden circlets." Here is the Christmas spirit as expressed by an artist. Prosaic minds can not understand it.

Some artists—mainly of the Venetian School—desiring to set forth the dignity of the Mother of God and the divinity of the Child Jesus rather than the

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motherliness of the one and the humanity of the other, produced very decorative pictures of great architectural beauty. Among these are several entitled "The Madonna Enthroned." The most famous of the Venetian School are those by: Giorgione, Bellini, Palma Vecchio, and Titian.

Bellini, for a background of his Madonna, repeated the architecture of the church of St. Zaccaria in Venice for which he had painted a perfectly unified group of figures consisting of the Madonna and Child on an illuminated throne with SS. Peter and Catherine on their right, and SS. Jerome and Lucia on their left. A graceful angel-musician seated on the base of the throne secures the balance. I could readily believe that this is a picture before which a devout person could make a lengthy meditation with pleasure. Dignity and tranquillity are perfectly symbolized by the Madonna and the saints. The Holy Child standing on His Mother's knee shows His approval by raising His little hand in blessing.

In the Cathedral of Castelfranco, Giorgione painted a "Madonna with SS. Liberale and Francis" for the Costanzi family in memory of their son, who had devotion to St. Liberale. This saint is shown clad in armor and carrying a crusader's banner which, to my mind, spoils the pyramidal form of the composition. At the apex of the pyramid is the throne chair; thus making the Madonna and the Infant Jesus lying on her lap the center of attraction—as they should be. Ruskin pronounced Giorgione's "Madonna" "one of the two most perfect pictures in existence."

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The Divine Infant in Palma Vecchio's "Madonna Enthroned" is a less serious-looking Child. He is standing on His very stately Mother's lap and is blessing the saints in the foreground—St. George and St. Lucia. The composition lacks unity and naturalness. The brilliancy of the coloring in the original painting, however, must have made the scene very attractive.

There is one artist who deserves to be better known than he is—Moretto of Brescia. He was a fine technician and his works show tenderness, gravity, and elevation of sentiment. One would think that he could never place Little Jesus and His beautiful mother high enough. He has even a "Madonna in Glory" with an active Child like one of Correggio's on her lap, and her free arm around baby St. John. Looking up from the earth, are SS. Agnes, Euphemia, Paterius, and Benedict. The figures are life size, and the whole work is beautifully colored. Moretto placed another Madonna and Child high up between the columns that rise above her empty niche. The queenly mother is trying to make her little Son notice St. Nicholas and the children who had been murdered by their own father, and whom the good saint had raised to life. The Divine Child is very beautiful, and is showing more natural affection for His Mother than is shown in any other picture that I am familiar with. It is the Infant Jesus who makes St. Nicholas so kind to children.

In one of Raphael's pictures, our Blessed Lady is represented as seated on a high platform. She is lis-

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tening attentively to the archangel Raphael, who is encouraging the young Tobias to implore her aid. The Divine Child looks as though He wanted to leap from His Mother's lap to welcome the visitors, and to tell them that their story would one day be written for the encouragement of others in distress. I need not tell you that this picture is called "The Madonna of the Fish." St. Jerome is holding a Bible on which Little Jesus has his left hand. The famous lion is crouching at the corner of the platform. The presence of St. Jerome might be called an anachronism, which means the misplacement of persons or events in point of time. Young Tobias lived long before the birth of Christ, and St. Jerome a few centuries after. Of course, Raphael did not forget this fact when painting the scene in which St. Jerome is taking no part. The great Doctor of the Church serves as a symbol of the Scriptures, and, incidentally, to give balance to the composition.

Of all the Madonnas painted by Flemish artists, those of Hans Memling are, undoubtedly, the most refined and devotional. Paul Rubens was a greater genius than Memling, but his religious pictures can not compare favorably with the Italian masters. The "Holy Family" of the Pitti Gallery is admired by many for its coloring and technique, but it lacks spiritual expression.

A "Madonna Enthroned" that is domestic as well as majestic, was painted by Quentin Matsys, a painter of Dutch ancestry, but French and Flemish by influence. In the picture, the Mother is seated on a

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rich throne having agate pillars with embossed capitals of gold. She is robed as a queen, and the Divine Child is enthroned on her lap. A pleasing landscape forms the background. All this is truly royal; yet we are tempted to call Matsys' picture a "Madonna of Love" rather than an "Enthroned Madonna"; for in the foreground is a breakfast table, and Little Jesus looks as though He was giving His sweet, girlish Mother a good morning kiss. Heaven is not far from earth in this picture.

Artists and art lovers of the present day are showing a decided preference for the "Portrait Madonna," which was the style of Madonna chosen by the primitives centuries ago. With early painters the choice of "Portrait Madonna" was a matter of necessity; with us, it is a matter of preference. We like its simplicity which enables us to contemplate without distraction the purpose of the picture—the relation of a Virgin to the Child she holds in her arms. The "Portrait Madonnas" of Gabriel Max may not wholly satisfy us, but they do make us certain that the artist's theme was *motherhood*.

"The most beautiful picture of children ever painted," say the art critics, "is Murillo's 'The Children of the Shell.' " It shows the Divine Child giving His little cousin St. John a drink from a shell filled with water from the spring at their feet. Two lovely baby angels and a gentle lamb look on enviously.

Several modern artists—non-Catholic as well as Catholic—have painted the Madonna and the Divine Child with reverence and sympathy. We are familiar

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with the pictures of Bouguereau, Bodenhausen, Defregger, and Sichel. Bouguereau's "Madonna of the Angels" is a general favorite. It has dignity; but in this it is not to be compared with the "Sistine Madonna," nor even with inferior works of past ages. To catch a religious spirit and give it expression one must breathe a religious atmosphere. This was not difficult in the Middle Ages.

In answer to the question, "What is beauty?" a noted writer replied: "Beauty is truth and goodness, crowned with flowers or with thorns, and hovering above the earth just beyond our touch; but many of our artists think that beauty is life and sense, crowned with flowers or with thorns and walking upon the earth. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to study the *art* of beauty to the neglect of the *science* of beauty; and this neglect makes the art of beauty weaker than it would otherwise be. If realism is art let us crown the camera and the barrel of plaster-of-paris."

The slogan *Art for Art's Sake* is one of the many absurdities that, for a time, delude the amateur.

NINTH NIGHT

The Infant Jesus in the Liturgy

The Infant Jesus in the Liturgy

OUR holy Mother Church neglects to honor in her Liturgy no period of our Divine Saviour's life on earth. During the Christmas season, the infancy of Jesus is brought to the minds of her children with every possible manifestation of joy. The prayers, hymns, music, and decorations of the time all lift up our hearts and make us share the perpetual youth of the Great Little One of Bethlehem and of the Church He founded.

An appeal to our senses often moves our intellect and will, and aids devotion. It is related that when King Clovis, who had been converted by the prayers and the good example of his wife, St. Clotilda, entered the Church on Christmas Eve, he was so struck by the beauty of the scene that he turned to St. Remigius, who had just baptized him, and said, "Is this the Kingdom thou didst promise me?" "No, my son," replied the bishop, "it is but the way that will lead thee to it."

From the Liturgy we learn that our first duty at the Crib of the Infant God is to adore Him. We can do this simply in our own weak words; or we can do it grandly by reciting the hymn for Vespers and Matins which was composed by St. Ambrose in the sixth century. Notice the homage that is paid the tiny

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Babe by saluting Him as: "Redeemer of mankind,"
"Light and brightness of the Father," "Creator of all
things."

Jesu, Redemptor omnium

Jesus, the Ransomer of man,
Who, ere created light began,
Didst from the sovereign Father spring,
His power, and glory equaling.

The Father's Light and Splendor Thou,
Their endless Hope to Thee that bow;
Accept the prayers and praise today,
That through the world Thy servants pay.

Salvation's Author, call to mind
How, taking form of humankind,
Born of a Virgin undefiled,
Thou in man's flesh becam'st a Child.

Thus testifies the present day,
Through every year in long array,
That Thou, salvation's source alone,
Proceedest from the Father's throne.

The heavens above, the rolling main
And all that earth's wide realms contain,
With joyous voice now loudly sing
The glory of their new-born King.

And we who, by Thy precious Blood
From sin redeemed, are marked for God,
On this the day that saw Thy birth,
Sing the new song of ransomed earth.

The Infant Jesus in the Liturgy

O Lord, the Virgin-born, to Thee
Eternal praise and glory be,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Ghost forevermore.

Our second duty is to rejoice with the little Babe, and also with His beautiful Mother and devoted foster-father, St. Joseph. The Holy Child rejoices, because He has brought to earth one of Heaven's best gifts—Joy itself—which He will place in the hearts of all who come to adore Him. Joy is the special gift of the Christmas season as all Christians realize. It seems almost sinful to show any sign of grief at this sacred time. All find it easier to sing and dance, to be kind and generous at Christmas time than at any other season of the year. The light from the Crib of Bethlehem makes all things bright—our homes, our churches, even worldly men's hearts. The "King of Infants," as St. Clement of Alexandria calls the Divine Babe, wants us all, young and old, to approach Him with the innocence and joy of little children. Let us give Him this joy, and He will give us peace.

Our third duty at the Crib is to thank *The Giver of All Good Gifts* for His generosity towards selfish creatures like ourselves. He not only comes to make us happy; He comes to suffer and to die for us so that we may have joy forever. He comes, moreover, as a beautiful, helpless Child so that we may not be afraid of our King. He is born in a stable; because where He Himself is homeless, He would have everyone feel at home. Notice, when you visit the churches, that no one hesitates to draw near the Holy Crib; no

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one feels out of place there. I am sure that many a hardened sinner has found at least a moment's peace kneeling among innocent children and devout old people before the Babe of Bethlehem.

What is our fourth duty? What else could it be but love? That necessarily follows joy and gratitude in a heart that is not wholly base. Jesus brought joy to earth to make us grateful and happy; and He brought love wherewith we penniless creatures may pay our debts to Him. No man could find love in treasure chests, nor the mines of the earth, but he can find it in his own heart if he wants it. Let us look for it there, since our good God will accept no other coin in payment for the treasures He lavishes upon us—especially at Christmas.

In our visits to the Crib let us in the spirit of our Holy Mother Church honor the Blessed Virgin—Mother of the little Babe whose poverty and humility she gladly shares. Some of us can sing in Latin the beautiful anthem “*Alma Redemptoris Mater*” to prove our belief in the doctrine that in honoring the Mother we honor the Son: Hermann Contractus is the author:—

Mother benign of our redeeming Lord,
Star of the sea and portal of the skies,
Unto thy fallen people help afford—
Fallen, but striving still anew to rise.

Thou who didst once, while wond'ring worlds adored,
Bear thy Creator, Virgin then as now,
O by thy holy joy at Gabriel's word,
Pity the sinners who before thee bow.

The Infant Jesus in the Liturgy

Joy follows love; hence it is that on Christmas Day the truest joy is found only in the hearts of those who love the little Babe of Bethlehem. Our Holy Mother Church does everything in her power to promote this spirit of joy, even dispensing with the law of abstinence when Christmas falls on a Friday, and encouraging sinless feasting and festivities. So attractive has she made her liturgy that, when men were stronger physically than they are now, they not only assisted at Midnight Mass as we do, but they took part in the whole Divine Office and considered it a privilege to spend the entire night in the church piously joining in the Psalms and Lessons of Matins, which were followed by Lauds, or hymns of praise.

If we could spend Christmas Eve in some cathedral or monastery, we should hear many times the invitation: "Christus natus est pro nobis, venite adoremus." These Latin words mean: "Christ is born unto us, come, let us adore Him." Liturgical writers tell us that in the Middle Ages it was the custom to veil the altar in black during the first part of Matins, which signifies the time which preceded the Written Law given by God to Moses. The black veil reminded the people of the punishment of our first Parents and of the long waiting for the Redeemer of mankind. The second part, or Nocturn, signifies the time under the Written Law. The altar was then covered with a white veil to show that men received light from the figures and prophecies of the Old Testament. The third part, or Nocturn, signifies the time since the coming of our Lord. Lastly, the altar

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was covered with a red veil to symbolize the love of God for His Church whereby His divine Son and our souls are mystically united.

The beautiful psalms of the Christmas Office are literally flowing over with the glory and praise of the Babe of Bethlehem. The first psalm of Matins celebrates His Kingly dignity:

“The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.”

The second psalm praises the loveliness of the stars that give testimony to the greatness of their Creator; and the brilliance of the Sun at its rising. The Sun is our Redeemer.

“The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands.

“He hath set His Tabernacle [The Blessed Virgin] in the sun, the image of His Son; and He as a Bridegroom coming out of His bride-chamber.”

The third psalm shows us Christ advancing in the conquest of the world in beauty and meekness, in justice and in truth.

“Thou, O Emmanuel, art beautiful above the sons of men; grace is poured forth in Thy lips; therefore, hath God blest Thee forever.

“With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously, and reign.”

The fourth psalm is a hymn of praise of the Christian Church which receives today in the Stable of Bethlehem the first believers—the humble shepherds.

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“For this is our God, our God unto eternity, and forever and ever: He [Our Shepherd] shall rule us forever.”

The fifth psalm announces the peaceful and just reign of Christ and the adoration of Kings.

“Let the mountains receive peace for the people; and the hills justice.

“He shall come down [mysteriously in the midnight] like rain upon the fleece, and as showers falling gently upon the earth.

“The Kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents; the Kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts.

“And all Kings of the earth shall adore Him; all nations shall serve Him.”

The sixth psalm is a hymn of thanksgiving for the blessing brought us by the Divine Child the sight of whom as He lies humbly in a manger appeases the just anger of Almighty Lord.

“Lord, thou hast blest thy land; thou hast [this night] turned away the captivity of Jacob.

“Mercy and Truth have met each other; Justice and Peace have kissed.”

The seventh psalm—the first of the third Nocturn—is the prayer of the Jewish people for their expected Messiah. The scepter has fallen from the hands of Juda, yet they see no sign of a mighty King coming to deliver them nor will they. The expectant multitude calls upon God to keep His promises to David.

“The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever.

“For thou hast said: ‘Mercy shall be built up for-

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ever in the heavens; thy truth shall be prepared in them.

“‘I have made a covenant with my elect; I have sworn to David my servant; thy seed will I settle forever.’”

The eighth psalm is the 95th—one of our favorites of the Christmas season. It is a psalm of intense joy calling on all nations to adore the Messias—the little Babe of Bethlehem.

“Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: sing to the Lord all the earth.

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea be moved, and the fullness thereof; the fields and all things that are in them shall be joyful.”

The ninth psalm is another *New Cantic* in praise of Jehovah who has at last sent our Redeemer. We are invited not only to use our voices to express our joy and gratitude, but also to make melody by the aid of musical instruments.

“Sing joyfully to God all the earth; make melody, rejoice and sing.

“Sing praise to the Lord on the harp, on the harp and with the voice of a psalm: with long trumpets, and sound of cornet.”

At the conclusion of the Lessons and songs of praise, the Infant Jesus lying in His Crib is welcomed to earth with the grandest hymn of Holy Mother Church—the “Te Deum”—our thanksgiving. Then we ask for the one thing necessary in the following prayer:—

“Grant we beseech thee, O Almighty God, that we

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who groan under the old captivity of sin, may be freed therefrom by the new birth of thine Only Begotten Son."

A solis ortus cardine

From lands that see the sun arise
To earth's remotest boundaries,
The Virgin-born today we sing,
The Son of Mary, Christ the King.

Blest Author of this earthly frame,
To take a servant's form He came,
That, liberating flesh by flesh,
Whom He had made might live afresh.

In that chaste parent's holy womb
Celestial grace hath found its home;
And she, as earthly bride unknown,
Yet calls that Offspring blest her own.

The mansion of the modest breast
Becomes a shrine where God shall rest:
The pure and undefiled one
Conceived in her womb the Son.

That Son, that Royal Son she bore,
Whom Gabriel's voice had told afore;
Whom, in His mother yet concealed,
The infant Baptist had revealed.

The manger and the straw He bore,
The cradle did He not abhor;
By milk in infant portions fed,
Who gives e'en fowls their daily bread.

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The heavenly chorus filled the sky,
The Angels sang to God on high,
What time to shepherds, watching lone,
They made creation's Shepherd known.

All honor, laud, and glory be,
O Jesu, Virgin-born to Thee:
All glory, as is ever meet,
To Father and Paraclete.

The last three psalms of Lauds have the same beautiful Antiphon:—

“A little Child is this day born unto us, and he shall be called *God*, the Mighty One, alleluia, alleluia.” The last psalm, which is the last of the psalter, calls on *every thing that can breathe forth music*, to come and honor the Divine Infant with sweetest melody.

On the Feast of the Holy Innocents is sung a beautiful hymn in honor of the Childhood of the Great King who rules Heaven and earth. This hymn was composed by St. Clement of Alexandria, a great scholar of the early Church. The opening lines are:—

“Curb of the young untamed ones—Wing that protectest chickens which keep nigh their mother—sure Rudder of infant age—Shepherd of the King's lambs!—call together thy simple children, and bid them praise with holy hearts, and sweetly sing with pure lips, Jesus, the King of Infants.”

The Church in honoring the Babe of Bethlehem, never loses sight of His Blessed Mother. An ancient

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Prose found in old German missals, thus salutes her:—

“Glorious, powerful, and sovereign Empress! Noble Mother and daughter of Jesus! Fair Root of Jesse. Branch lovely in thy bloom and leaf, watered by the plentiful grace of God.

“Joseph, *the Just Man*, saw his lovely Branch in Flower; none else could know like him and tremble at the Mystery. But the secret was sacred and well did he keep it, revealing it to no mortal ear. Mary was his Spouse, and he extolled her; she was his Lady, and he honored her.”

The hymn for Lauds on the Feast of the Holy Innocents was composed in Latin by Prudentius in the fourth or fifth century. Of the twenty-five translations of this hymn, Father Caswall's is noted for beauty as well as for the fidelity of rendering.

Salvete flores Martyrum

Flowers of martyrdom all hail!
Smitten by the tyrant foe
On life's threshold,—as the gale
Strews the roses ere they blow.

First to bleed for Christ, sweet lambs!
What a simple death ye died!
Sporting with your wreaths and palms
At the very altar side!

Honor, glory, virtue, merit,
Be to Thee, O Virgin's Son!
With the Father, and the Spirit,
While eternal ages run.

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On Christmas Day the Church is wholly concerned with Our Lord as a little Babe adored by His Mother, and foster-father, and some poor shepherds representing the humble ones of earth. On the feast of the Epiphany she commemorates three great events in the life of the King of Kings: His manifestation of Himself to the Gentiles; His Baptism; and His first miracle. The sixth of January was already a great day in pagan Rome commemorating a triple triumph of the Emperor Augustus. The celebrations of the Christians, therefore, passed unnoticed. The Greek Church gives all her attention to the Baptism of Christ on the sixth of January having united her services in honor of the Adoration of the Magi with the Office of Christmas.

The Offertory of the Mass for Epiphany gives the prophecy concerning the three Kings that is found in Psalm lxxi.

The Kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the Kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts: and all the Kings of the earth shall adore Him; all nations shall serve Him.

A Sequence used in many of the Churches of the West during the Middle Ages on the thirteenth day of January celebrates the three great Mysteries of the Epiphany:

A Star has miraculously risen that was foretold by the Prophets: it tells the rising of the divine Light.

It guides the Magi, it terrifies Herod, it leads the Gentiles to Jesus, the haven of peace.

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It reveals the Child, the creator of the stars, the avenger of crime, the Strong God.

The mystic gifts proclaim him to be the Ruler of all things, and the Redeemer who saved us by his death.

He is baptized in the waters, and the waters imbibe from him a virtue, whereby they wash away Adam's sins.

The Dove is seen: the voice of the Father speaks his love of the Son, therefore making known his glory.

The word of John bears also testimony; and the law of love is begun.

The guests are gladdened, when the spring-water is made to do the service of the better wine.

The Word of the Father is espoused in sweet love in the womb of the Virgin, the Spouse without stain.

May he cleanse our sins, and so loosen our chains, protecting us for ever, at his Mother's prayer. Amen.

Our talk on the Infant Jesus in the Liturgy will be of lasting benefit if we memorize and often recite the Collect of the Feast of the Holy Family which the Church keeps on the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who, when Thou wast subject to Mary and Joseph, didst sanctify the home life with ineffable virtues: grant that by their joint assistance we may profit by the example of Thy Holy Family and become partakers of their eternal happiness.

The Benedictine author of "The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal" says: "The study of the ancient classics and of Christian hymns may and should go hand in hand. Each has its own purpose; there is no quarrel between them. The one serves to cultivate a

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delicate and refined taste, the other enkindles in the soul the loftiest sentiments of religion. The study of the former prepares one for a fuller and more generous enjoyment of the latter."

The liturgical use of hymns has, undoubtedly, been an important factor in the conversion of learned men and women. To cite one instance—Paul Claudel, the noted French poet, lost for a time his grasp on Catholic truth and lapsed into atheism. God in His goodness gave him back his rejected gift of faith, not during a scientific or a theological discussion, but while he was listening to a Vesper service at Notre Dame, Paris, on the birthday of the Infant Jesus.

TENTH NIGHT
Christmastide Masses

Christmastide Masses

THE greatest act of religion—the only one that can give fitting homage to the good God to Whom we owe all that we are and have—is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. On the great feast of Christmas, therefore, our Holy Mother Church permits each priest to make this great Offering three times in order to welcome Little Jesus, and to thank the First and the Second Persons of the Blessed Trinity who made His coming possible. A second reason for the three Masses is to honor the triple birth of our Divine Saviour; His birth in the stable of Bethlehem; His birth by grace and mercy in the hearts of the shepherds and of all who believe in Him; and His eternal birth in the Bosom of God the Father.

At Rome in the early ages of the Church, the Pope celebrated the first Mass at midnight in the Basilica of St.-Mary-Major. Then, accompanied by all the people, he went to the Church of St. Anastasia where he sang the second Mass, called the Mass of the Aurora, or Dawn. As soon as this Mass was over, the procession marched to St. Peter's. Matins and Lauds were chanted before the Holy Father sang the third Mass. By this time it was about nine o'clock in the morning.

Do you think that many people of our day could

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stand such long religious ceremonies? I do not believe they could, unless they had the love for them that Christians had in the Ages of Faith. Then, at Christmastide all festivities had the Babe of Bethlehem for their central idea. Now, let us consider the Midnight Mass. We can enjoy in spirit this hour—and without tramping for miles through cold and snow as many of our pious ancestors did with intense fervor.

Let us ask our Blessed Lady to permit us to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the altar in union with her, so that we may share the feelings that she had when she saw the Infant God and held Him to her heart for the first time in the cold stable at Bethlehem. We will invite dear St. Joseph, too, so that he may warm our hearts where Jesus will be born again before the Mass is finished. The Divine Child will gladly come to us with His graces and pardon, since we have all tried so hard to make our souls pure and beautiful in His sight.

As we enter the brilliantly lighted cathedral for our Midnight Mass, we will have some idea of the astonishment and joy of King Clovis and, three hundred years later, of Charlemagne when each entered the Church on a Christmas night—the former to be baptized, the latter to be crowned Emperor. We will feel that a greater Prince than either is to be honored now, and by our humble selves. The Prince of Peace will accept our loving hearts as a cradle, and there He will be born again.

Our missals will help us to enter into the spirit of the Church. With her ministers we shall sing the

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thrilling words of the Gloria, and cry out to the Infant God: "Thou only, O Jesus, art Holy! Thou only art Lord! Thou only art Most High!" With the whole congregation we shall recite the Collect: "O God, who hast enlightened this most sacred Night by the brightness of Him who is the true Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mysteries of this Light on earth, may likewise come to the enjoyment of it in heaven." In the Epistle, St. Paul will exhort us to "live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world; looking for the blessed hope, and coming of the glory of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." The Gospel will tell in the best possible way the story of the first Christmas. You will find it in the second chapter of St. Luke's gospel.

At that time, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city. And Joseph, also, went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapt him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by

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them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them: Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day, is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will.

Having read this beautiful story at Midnight Mass, we shall be ready to make a very fervent profession of faith while the Creed is being sung; and to adore profoundly the Newborn King when we see the priest and his attendants go to the foot of the altar for a few moments. We are then being reminded of the Day's great mystery: *ET INCARNATUS EST DE SPIRITU SANCTO EX MARIA VIRGINE, ET HOMO FACTUS EST.* These Latin words mean: *And became incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary: and was made Man.* At this solemn moment, let us try to picture to ourselves the Blessed Virgin kneeling in ecstasy before the Divine Babe, her own little Son true God and true Man, just born in the cold stable at Bethlehem. Let us adore Him and offer Him a warm place in our hearts.

At the Offertory we must recall the intentions for which we have decided to offer our Midnight Mass. We have so many, there will not be time to put them all into words, but Jesus will understand. Remember,

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Jesus is the King of Kings as well as a tiny infant; so the more we ask of Him the better pleased He will be. The church choir will sing at this time the beautiful words: LET THE HEAVENS REJOICE, AND THE EARTH BE GLAD IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, FOR HE HAS COME.

If you use your missal, you will notice that there is a special Preface for Christmas. It is said also during the Octave; on the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus; and on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin. Notice how closely the Immaculate Mother is associated with her Divine Son. Never forget that we cannot honor the Son without honoring the Mother. The Christmas Preface is very beautiful:

“It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God; for that, by the mystery of the Incarnate Word, a new ray of Thy glory has appeared to the eyes of our soul: so that, while we behold God visibly, we may be carried by Him to the love of things invisible: and therefore, with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominations, and with all the heavenly host, we sing a hymn to Thy glory, saying unceasingly: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!”

Oh, how filled with reverence we shall be at the most solemn part of the Mass—the *Canon*. Then will God be truly born again on the altar as the priest says with Jesus: “This is my Body; this is my Blood.” In a few moments, Jesus will be born again in our

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hearts—the hearts that we have been preparing for Him with so much love and eagerness during the four weeks of Advent. Our holy faith teaches us that the same thing will happen in countless places all over the earth—in great cathedrals and, just as truly, in lowly cabins and desert tents—wherever those sacred words are said by a priest of God. We believe, though we cannot fully understand this great mystery. How humble we ought to be when Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of All, makes Himself the Servant of His creatures! We can only bow down before Him and adore Him with the Angels and love Him as our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph did when He held out His little arms to them on that first Christmas Night.

The second Mass of Christmas, called *the Mass of the Aurora*, because in early days it was said at dawn after Lauds had been sung, will, in our church, follow Midnight Mass; so we can make a long thanksgiving during it. This seems to me to be very appropriate, for in this Mass the Church celebrates a Birth full of grace and mercy in the hearts of the shepherds, and likewise in the hearts of all faithful Christians. It is *our* Mass. Let us then think of the call of the simple men who were the first worshipers of Jesus after Mary and Joseph. Beg them to help us to imitate their faith and their promptness in recognizing and adoring the Saviour. What these poor men felt in their hearts, but could not express in words, St. Peter said later: *The Light that shineth in a dark place has been our one desire and attention—now*

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the Day will dawn, and the Day-Star arise in our hearts. The Introit of this Mass is a beautiful expression of this idea: "A light shall shine upon us this day, because the Lord is born for us; and His name shall be the Wonderful One, God the Prince of Peace, the Father of the world to come; of whose reign there shall be no end. Ps.: The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed in beauty: the Lord is clothed in strength and hath girded Himself."

How the shepherds responded to the bidding of the Angel who announced the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth is given in the Gospel of the second Mass:

"At that time: The Shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word, that has come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger. And seeing, they understood of the word, that had been spoken to them, concerning this Child. And all that heard, wondered; and at those things that were told them by the Shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the Shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

Notice the effect of seeing Jesus. The shepherds came wondering—some, perhaps, doubting and grumbling—about the trouble of going to Bethlehem on a cold night. But after they had seen Jesus and His Blessed Mother, all was brightness and joy. They

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understood, and returned to their flocks glorifying and praising God. All that God asks of us is good will. He will do the rest and give us the peace promised by the Angel. Good Catholic families returning to their homes after Midnight Masses, no matter under what difficulties of roads or weather, are filled with the peace and joy of the shepherds. They have had a greater privilege than the first adorers. They have received the Infant God into the cradle of their pure hearts and have worshiped Him there. There is no more beautiful place on earth on Christmas Eve than a truly Catholic home. It may be grand or it may be humble, even poor; yet it has every sign of peace and happiness. There is perfect union between parents and their children. The home is decorated for the morrow's human festivities, but tonight there is an air of mystery. Even the little children speak in subdued tones as they move about. One thought is uppermost in the minds of all—Jesus will be born again in a few hours, and Father and Mother and big brothers and sisters are going to the Midnight Mass. In the morning the younger members of the family will attend the third Mass. Only after this will they look at the gifts that the Infant Jesus gave Santa Claus for them. Would that such homes were more numerous!

The third Christmas Mass celebrates the eternal Birth of the Son of God. We are reminded of this every time we say what you call *the last gospel*. St. John says, "In the beginning [that means for all eternity] was the Word, and the Word was with God,

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and the Word was God." The *Word*, spelled with a capital letter, means the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity—Jesus Christ equal to His Heavenly Father in all things. He is called *Light of Light* and *Angel of Great Council* because when the Blessed Trinity made a Plan or Council to save mankind who had forfeited Heaven through Adam's sin, Jesus offered Himself to carry out this plan. We must not forget to thank Him for this when we kneel at the Crib. Jesus has loved us, not only from the day of His birth in the stable of Bethlehem, but from all eternity; and if we show our love for Him by avoiding sin, He will love us for endless ages.

In the Introit of this Mass we read: "A Child is born unto us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His Shoulder: and His name shall be called the Angel of the Great Council.

"Ps.: Sing to the Lord a new Canticle for He hath done wonderful things. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

In the Epistle of this Mass—which is St. Paul's to the Hebrews—we are shown the difference between God's manner of enlightening His people under the Old Law and His manner of enlightening us. To the former He sent Prophets; to us, He sent His own Divine Son Jesus. From this Epistle, we also learn how superior Christ is to the Angels.

For to which of the Angels hath he said, at any time: *Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee?* And again: *I will be to him a Father, and he shall*

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be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the Angels of God adore Him. And to the Angels, indeed, he saith: He that maketh his Angels Spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But to the Son: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of justice is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And: Thou in the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth, and the works of thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish but thou shalt continue; and they shall all grow old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the self-same, and thy years shall not fail.

The first Gospel is the one we usually call *the Last Gospel* because it is said so frequently at the end of Mass. Strange to say, the very last Gospel said on Christmas Day is St. Matthew's story of the coming of the Wise Men. This gives one great pleasure. It looks as though Holy Mother Church did not want any person or nation to be without a share in the liturgy of the Saviour's Birthday.

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the East, to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to adore him. And Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with

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him. And assembling together all the chief priests, and the scribes of the people, he enquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda: for it is written by the Prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod privately calling the Wise Men, learned diligently of them the time of the star, which appeared to them: and sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go, and diligently enquire after the Child: and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him. Who, having heard the king, went their way. And behold the star, which they had seen in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, his Mother, and falling down, they adored him. And, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep, that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country."

In this gospel we find sufficient reason for loving and venerating the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady—*And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, His Mother*. When reading those precious words, one feels like crying out with Blessed Hermann Contractus:

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"Hail Mary! beautiful Star of the Sea! that hast risen by God's mercy, to give light to all nations.

"Welcome! O Gate open to none but God! Thou bringest in to the world the Light of Truth, the very Sun of Justice, clad in human flesh.

"O Virgin! thou beauty of the world, Queen of Heaven, brilliant as the Sun, lovely as the moon's brightness! think on all us who love thee.

"Hear us, O Mary! for thy Son honors thee by granting thee all thy prayers.

"And Thou, O Jesus, save us, for whom thy Virgin Mother prays."

Time does not permit us to consider in our Story Hour the beauty of the Masses that immediately follow Christmas Day. The Collect of each, however, will tell us the particular thing Holy Mother Church points out to us in the lives of the saints to be honored during the week.

December 26, St. Stephen

Collect: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may imitate him whose memory we celebrate, so as to learn to love even our enemies; because we now solemnize his martyrdom, who knew how to pray, even for his persecutors, to our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son.

December 27, St. John

Collect: Mercifully, O Lord, enlighten Thy Church: that being taught by blessed John, thine Apostle and Evangelist, she may come to Thy eternal rewards.

Christmastide Masses

December 28, Holy Innocents

Collect: O God, whose praise the holy Martyrs, the Innocents, published this day, not by speaking, but by dying; mortify in us all our vicious inclinations: that we may show forth, in our actions, Thy faith, which we profess with our lips.

December 29, St. Thomas of Canterbury

Collect: O God, in defense of whose Church the glorious Pontiff Thomas fell by the swords of wicked men: grant, we beseech Thee, that all who implore his assistance, may find comfort in the grant of their petition.

ELEVENTH NIGHT

The Infant Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

The Infant Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

WE have seen that Christmastide is essentially a season of social life and gaiety throughout the greater part of the world; yet we wonder why it should be so. The word "Christmas" means Christ's Mass. Then, why should those who believe in neither Christ nor the Mass choose this particular time for merry-making and exchange of gifts—signs of friendship that are appropriate at any season? Some mysterious influence must be at work at each recurring anniversary of the birth of Christ. Catholics have a logical reason for rejoicing at Christmas; for they believe that at every Mass, offered anywhere at any time, the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Nativity are renewed; and, therefore, it is fitting that they should communicate the first appearance of the God-Man with every possible sign of holy joy. A Catholic church is truly a Bethlehem—a *House of Bread*. Let us think of this, especially when on our way to Mass. Let us seek Jesus, the Messiah, in the spirit of the Magi, and we shall be rewarded as they were.

The Wise Men followed a star; we are often called by a bell. They found the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes; we, at the consecration of the Mass, behold the same Child hidden under the form of

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bread. They understood, and falling down adored their Lord and King; we understand still better, and adore the Divine Babe at His second birth, which took place when the priest pronounced the sacred words: *This is my Body*. We are certain that we behold—not bread—but Jesus Christ whole and entire, still in Heaven, and at the same time present (in a sacramental manner) in the Host. Why are we so sure of this? Because Our Lord said so. We should be as ready to defend the doctrine of the Real Presence as St. Jane Frances de Chantal was when she heard it denied by a Calvinist nobleman who was disputing with her father. “What, Sir,” said the indignant little girl, then only five years old, “you do not believe that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet He has told us that He is present? You make Him a liar. If you dared attack the honor of the king, my father would defend it at the risk of his life. What do you think God will do to you for calling His Son a liar?”

When visiting the Blessed Sacrament at Christmas time, we like to imagine Jesus as a smiling Infant. We are told in Church History that He has appeared in that form to certain holy persons for some reason unknown to us. We do not desire such favors; but we try to so strengthen our faith that we shall not need anything more than Christ’s own words. We read that in the year 1258, St. Louis, King of France, was assisting at Mass in the chapel of his palace, now called *Sainte Chapelle*, when, at the elevation, the Host disappeared and many of

The Infant Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

the courtiers present saw in the priest's hands a beautiful little child. They told the King, but he did not move; nor could they prevail upon him to raise his eyes in order to see the Divine Infant. "Let those look who have not faith," said Louis; "as for me, I believe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, just as if I saw Him with my eyes." May God grant us all the faith of this pious King and may we on entering a church where the *Guard of Honor* is shining, feel inspired to cry out with St. Anselm:

"Hail! Christ's pure Body—born of the Holy Virgin—
Living flesh, and true Man, and perfect Godhead!
Hail! Christ's pure Blood. Hail! hallowed Draught of
Heaven,
Life-giving Wave that cleanses all offenses!"

It is not sufficient for us merely to believe that Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament; we must also let others see that we believe by our respectful attitude in church, and by frequently letting Christ be born again in our hearts in Holy Communion. Some of you are now taking part in the Catholic Action Movement. Try to be as well prepared to defend the truth as the great painter Leonardo da Vinci was when he heard some heretics in an inn scoffing at Catholic doctrine in regard to the Blessed Sacrament. One guest, a Calvinist, said to his companions: "The words 'this is my body' only mean that the bread is a symbol of the Body of Christ." Another replied: "Not so! They mean that bread

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and wine become at the moment of their reception, by the faith of the recipient, the Body and Blood of Christ." While the men were thus disputing, Leonardo took a piece of paper and drew the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Luther on the right hand and Calvin on the left. Under the image of our Saviour he wrote the words: "This *is* my Body." Under the figure of Calvin he wrote: "This *signifies* my Body." And under the figure of Luther he wrote: "This *becomes* my Body in the moment that you eat it." Then handing the paper to the disputants, Leonardo said: "Which of these three is right, Jesus, Calvin, or Luther?" The men were intelligent enough to feel the force of the argument. Let us hope that they were brave enough to accept the truth.

One hopeful thought that we entertain for blood-drenched Spain today is born of our knowledge of the exterior as well as of the interior reverence ever paid by Catholic Spanish sovereigns and their subjects towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The powers of darkness may make martyrs, but they will never extinguish the light of Catholicity in Spain! The much-maligned Philip II always mingled with the common throng without any signs of royalty when he walked in processions of the Blessed Sacrament. One exceedingly warm day when a page attempted to shield his master from the burning sun, Philip said: "Never mind, the sun will do me no harm; at such a time as this we must regard neither rain nor wind, heat nor cold." After having walked a great distance, a priest carrying the Blessed Sacra-

The Infant Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

ment asked him if he were not tired. "Tired!" replied the King, "behold! my servants wait upon me day and night, and never have I heard one of them complain of being tired. Shall I, then, complain of fatigue when I am waiting upon my Lord and my God, Whom I can never sufficiently serve and honor!" On at least one occasion King Alfonso and Queen Christina descended from their carriage and obliged a priest, who was taking the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, to enter while they followed on foot. Similar acts of reverence have been performed by different sovereigns of Austria, Belgium, and other countries. Of course, you will say that the royal personages only did their duty. You are right; nevertheless, they deserve praise for doing their duty when very inferior people are ashamed even to lift their hats when passing a church. St. Thomas More is, probably, one of the best models we could propose for Catholic laymen in regard to respect for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. A biographer tells us that on one occasion while assisting at Mass, Sir Thomas received word that the King wished to see him at once on urgent business, but the courageous man took no notice of the messenger, nor did he heed the pleadings of a second. To a third terrified messenger who commanded him to go at once to the royal chamber where King Henry awaited him impatiently, Sir Thomas calmly replied, "Tell His Majesty that I am now serving the Lord of lords, Whose service I must now perform." How many men of the present day would have the sense of

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values and the moral courage of St. Thomas More! He lost his head, it is true, but he found eternal joy.

So meaningful are the names given by the prophets to the long-expected Messiah, that a biography could be built up from them. Emmanuel means *God with us*—a very appropriate name for Jesus in the Tabernacle where He remains day and night, year in and year out. He leaves this Manger only to give Himself to us as spiritual Food, or to bless us when enthroned in the monstrance. The prophecy of Isaias containing the name *Emmanuel* is used more than once in the Advent Liturgy: Behold, a maiden shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.—Isai. VII. In another chapter, Isaias piles up names, as though he were overcome by the knowledge of the Messiah vouchsafed him. No wonder! The prophet in his enthusiasm says: "Light shall shine today upon us, for the Lord is born unto us, and He shall be called 'Wonderful, God, Prince of Peace, Father of Eternity,' and of His kingdom there shall be no end." To these titles, the prophet David adds: "The Lord is King: with beauty hath He arrayed Himself and girded Himself with might."—Ps. lxii. The Introit of the Dawn Mass on Christmas Day is composed of these two prophecies. I believe that if all the meditation books in the world were lost, one could find in this Introit sufficient material for thought and for conversation with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The name *Prince of Peace* will appeal to young people who never enjoy a fairy

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tale unless a prince figures in it. In the Tabernacle is a real Prince, the beloved Son of the King of Heaven. The glory of the celestial court is His, and He is surrounded by the nine choirs of angels who love and praise Him. He is with them, yet at the same time He is in every Tabernacle that holds consecrated Hosts. *His delight is to be with the children of men.* What is ours?

The Prince of Peace likes company. He wants to be loved, because He cannot show His great generosity to those who despise His gifts and never come to see Him. He never tires of giving—as do some rich people whom we know. All that we have to bring to the Altar Manger in return for His priceless gifts is *love*. Who is so poor that he cannot offer that? Why is Jesus so often alone in our churches? The only answer is, “Because we are so ignorant.” We really do not understand what the Blessed Sacrament is. Father Faber, that distinguished English convert, has summarized the main thoughts of his wonderful book, “The Blessed Sacrament, or the Works and Ways of God,” in a few words: “The Blessed Sacrament is God. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is simply divine worship. Turn it which way we will, throw the light of love and knowledge now on one side of it, now on another, still the result is the same, the one inexhaustible, sweet fact, the *Real Presence*—the Eternal, Incomprehensible, Almighty Word Who is everywhere and yet fixed there, the flashing fires of whose dear glory we could not bear to see, and so for love of us He stills them

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and He sheathes them in the quiet modesty of the Blessed Sacrament."

Let us appreciate our privilege of visiting the Son of God and of the Virgin Mary in His Tabernacle-Manger at any hour of the day or night on any day of the year. The Little King will always be glad to see us; and, what is more wonderful, He will understand all we want to tell Him even if we cannot find words to express our thoughts. When you feel most helpless, just look lovingly at the Tabernacle and say in your heart:

Jesus, Thy child is here:—

There is no need, my Lord, that I should speak,
Thou knowest I am foolish, poor, and weak—

Look on me, Master dear!

Silent I lift my gaze in faith to Thee,

Bend Thy kind eyes, my Christ, to look at me.

TWELFTH NIGHT

The Message of the Infant Jesus

The Message of the Infant Jesus

A WONDERFUL mystery is the fact that the Divine Infant in the stable of Bethlehem is a King—the greatest, most learned, and most powerful of all the kings that ever have been, or ever will be, on this earth of ours. Like all other kings, He must have a message for His people—a message worthy of His greatness and dignity.

The helpless-looking Child lying on rough straw had such a message, and so important was it, that throughout long ages before His Birth in Bethlehem heralds were sent out by His Heavenly Father to announce His coming. These heralds were holy men whom we call *prophets*. Some of the events which they foretold seemed so improbable to men, that but few believed them; for example, Micheas said that the King would be born at Bethlehem, an insignificant little town. “Why not in the glorious city of Jerusalem?” men asked. Jesus answered that question; and from His first throne—the lap of His Virgin Mother—delivered His message to the representatives of the poor and the rich; to the ignorant and the learned ones of earth. All were His beloved subjects. His consoling message was for all peoples and for all times. He graciously repeats it every year at Christmas.

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If we kneel devoutly at the Crib, we can hear the sublime message; for this King makes known His sentiments and wishes to us by environment and actions rather than by human speech. We must first make an act of faith; then we shall hear the smiling Babe say: "Yes, I am the Messias for Whose first coming John the Baptist prepared the way by preaching penance for the remission of sin. I am the Lord, and there is none else: there is no God besides me. I will not give my glory to another. I have come to cast fire upon earth, the fire of love without which penance will be of no avail. My delight is to be with the children of men; but they must be sinless if they would see me. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

"'But why do you come as a little Child?' men ask. I come as a helpless Babe so that no one may fear to approach me, and that I may be loved more readily. Earthly monarchs inspire dread, and boast of their strength and power. I would teach that the weakness of innocent childhood is far more pleasing to my Heavenly Father, and that the care of little children is more praiseworthy than the conquest of vast armies. Behold my Immaculate Mother, the model of all women! Let them learn of her to set a just value on lowly duties. Let them learn of her to be kind to little children, and to train them as the future citizens of Heaven should be trained.

"Learn of me to be meek and humble of heart. I am the King of Kings; yet I came to earth without a visible retinue save my Mother and my Foster-

The Message of the Infant Jesus

Father. My palace is a stable; my bed, a manger filled with straw, yet I make no complaint. My subjects say there is no room for me in the lighted halls where they make merry with one another while I am content to be sheltered in my pure Mother's arms, and warmed by the breath of dumb animals. I came to suffer—not to make others suffer. As a King, I chose poverty rather than wealth; but as a God, I must accept adorers. Who were the first? Poor, humble shepherds who cared for the lambs that were to be offered in sacrifice to my Father in the great temple at Jerusalem. These adorers were not blinded by pride. They obeyed the Angelic Messenger; and though they found no royal surroundings as they might have expected, they believed that I was a little Prince—the Messias long foretold—and they humbly adored and offered me their hearts. They gave me the only gifts suitable for the King of Heaven, and I accepted them gladly. I had commenced the work that my Father had sent me to do, and was happy. My sweet Mother and holy Joseph rejoiced with me; for they saw that the old order of pagan pride and worldly grandeur had passed away, and that humility and poverty would henceforth be esteemed. They praised Jehovah as they recalled the words of Isaias, and saw before them the fulfillment of the prophecy: 'A child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulders.'

"Yes, I have come to be your Emmanuel, because my Father so loved the world as to send Me—His

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Only Begotten Son—not to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Me. At my second coming, I shall act as Judge, not as Saviour. Now is the acceptable time. Come to the Manger and learn to love Me—a little Child—so that you will not fear me on that dread day when the wicked in despair will flee from my wrath into everlasting fire that was prepared—not for man—but for the devil and his angels.

“You see that to my underground palace come, not only the representatives of the poor and lowly, but also Wise Men who live in sumptuous homes. They are learned. They have studied the stars which I created. These men I receive gladly, for they have emptied their hearts of self-love and the love of riches. Learning has taught these truly wise men that before Infinite Wisdom they are ignorant indeed. With the simplicity of little children, who readily believe those whom they trust, the Magi followed a miraculous star, and found their King—though in a most un-kingly place. They offered Me the most precious things of the lands whence they had come—my own gifts to the earth.

“My visitors had expected to be overcome by awe in the presence of the long-expected Messias; but reassured by the smile of my gentle Mother, they approached fearlessly and clasped me to their hearts, which I filled with joy and love. I did more. I sent by them my love and blessing to their people to whom they would bring the glad tidings of a Saviour’s birth—a Saviour of every race regardless of

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color. All men are brethren, and I would have them live in peace and concord. I brought from Heaven *an olive branch*, not *a sword*. Recall the words of one of my heralds: 'The work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice quietness, and security forever.—And my people shall sit in the Beauty of peace, and in the Tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy Rest.' If you would be children of God, your King and Leader, you must preserve peace in your homes and in your country. Blessed are the peacemakers. They shall enjoy a 'wealthy Rest.' This is possible even in the midst of the sin and the misery that must needs be on this earth in consequence of Adam's fall. Believe in me, in my humanity as well as in my divinity; obey the commandments—especially the commandment of love—and regulate your daily life according to the example of my Virgin Mother and her industrious spouse, St. Joseph. From their treatment of Me, learn how to deal with little children—care for them, respect them, love them. Bring them to the Manger at Christmastide and tell them the story of My first coming. Implant in their little hearts a spirit of joy that will make them love My Birthday and be happy in giving rather than in receiving gifts. Let them remember the poor in honor of my poverty and the discomforts of My first home on earth. This is the message that I shall repeat every Christmas till the end of time."

Having heard the words of the Divine Child, and had our hearts replenished with joy and good will

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towards all mankind, let us leave the Crib with this thought uppermost in our minds: "Unless you become like little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus is the model that should be kept before God's little ones during their plastic years. Like Jesus, they should grow in age, and grace, and wisdom.

To imitate the Divine Child nothing extraordinary is required. At Nazareth, He talked and acted like other innocent boys, even joining in their simple games and studies. His divinity was carefully concealed, but His pure conversation and gentle, unselfish ways won their hearts and made His company agreeable. At times, of course, His wisdom astonished them; but it did not frighten them, nor excite their envy. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." In childhood as in manhood Jesus taught mainly by example. And how simple it all was! At home and abroad He was just Himself. In the family circle, a charming, lovable, docile child—the sunshine of Mary and Joseph; with strangers, dignified, courteous, and helpful when needed; in the synagogue, humble, attentive, reverential. Jesus was never unmindful of His Father in Heaven.

Simplicity seems to have been the chief characteristic of the Child Jesus, and it is not unlikely that it is the one that He most admires in us. Father Faber eulogizes this virtue in his wonderful work "Bethlehem."

"What is the grace of simplicity but a permanent childhood of the soul, fixed there by a special opera-

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tion of the Holy Ghost. The Shepherds, the Divine Babe's first apostles, possessed this virtue in an eminent degree. They were self-possessed, not by the hold which an interior spirit gave them over themselves, but through their extreme simplicity. An angel spoke to them, and they were neither humbled by it, nor elated; they are only afraid of the great light around them. It was as much a matter of course to them as belief in the intelligence; as if some belated peasant neighbor had passed by them on their pastoral watch, and told them some strange news. To simple minds, as to deep ones, everything is its own evidence. They heard the angelic chorus, and were soothed by it, yet they reflected not upon the honor done themselves who were admitted to its audience. Theirs was the simplicity of a childlike holiness which does not care to discriminate between the natural and the supernatural. Their restful souls were all life long becalmed in the thought of God."

It was humility rather than simplicity that drew the Magi to the feet of the Infant Jesus. They were men of science accustomed to reason; therefore, God sent them a sign, a miraculous star. Yet true science has its own beautiful simplicity. Learning makes children of its professors when their hearts are humble and their lives are pure. The Magi had sincerely studied the prophecies relating to the Messiah; therefore their faith was not shattered when they beheld the Cave, the beasts, a young girl, a poor artisan, and the King whom they sought lying as an Infant

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on a bed of straw. Father Faber says: "They hesitated not for one moment. There was no inward questioning as to whether there was a divine likelihood about all this. The inward eye was cleansed to see divine things with an unerring clearness, and to appreciate them with an instantaneous accuracy. They had come all that way for this. They had brought their gleaming metals and rich frankincense to the caverned cattle-shed when the myrrh alone seemed in keeping with the circumstances of the Child. They were content. It was not merely all they wanted; it was more than they wanted, more than they had ever dreamed. Who could come to Jesus and to Mary, and not go away contented, yet not content to go away? How kingly seemed to them the poverty of that Babe of Bethlehem, how right royal that sinless Mother's lap on which He was enthroned!"

Has the Infant King no throne on earth today? Yes, every Tabernacle in which he has been placed by the consecrated hands of His priests is His chosen throne whereon He holds audience for all who wish to come to Him—shepherds or kings. There He accepts our gifts of will, memory, and understanding. Jesus has yet another throne when He makes a pure human heart His Tabernacle. Need we envy the Magi? He gave them His blessing; He gives us Himself.

Having had our faith enlivened by the message of our Infant God and King let us thank God for Christmas.

The Message of the Infant Jesus

Christmas! There is a magic in the name
That wakes old thoughts. So let the candles flame
In every window. Let the fires be bright
On every hearth. And everywhere tonight
Let every tongue be kind. In every breast
Let there be joy that seeks to be expressed
In deeds of love and canticles of praise
For Him Who made this day the first of days!

Christmas! There is a blessing in the word.
Where is the Christian heart that is unstirred
By all its meaning? Thoughts of home are there,
And dreams of old we cherished fond and fair,
What well-beloved faces round the Tree
We see again, as once we used to see!
What bells from out remembered steeples ring!
What songs from those who nevermore may sing!

Thank God for Christmas. 'Tis a tender time
Of old remembrances. So let the rhyme
Writ in its praise to us be ever dear,
The blessed feast that cometh once a year
To bring us back again to childhood's toys,
To bring us back again to childhood's joys,
And back to Him Who loved us first,—and then
Came as a Child into the hearts of men!

D. A. McCarthy

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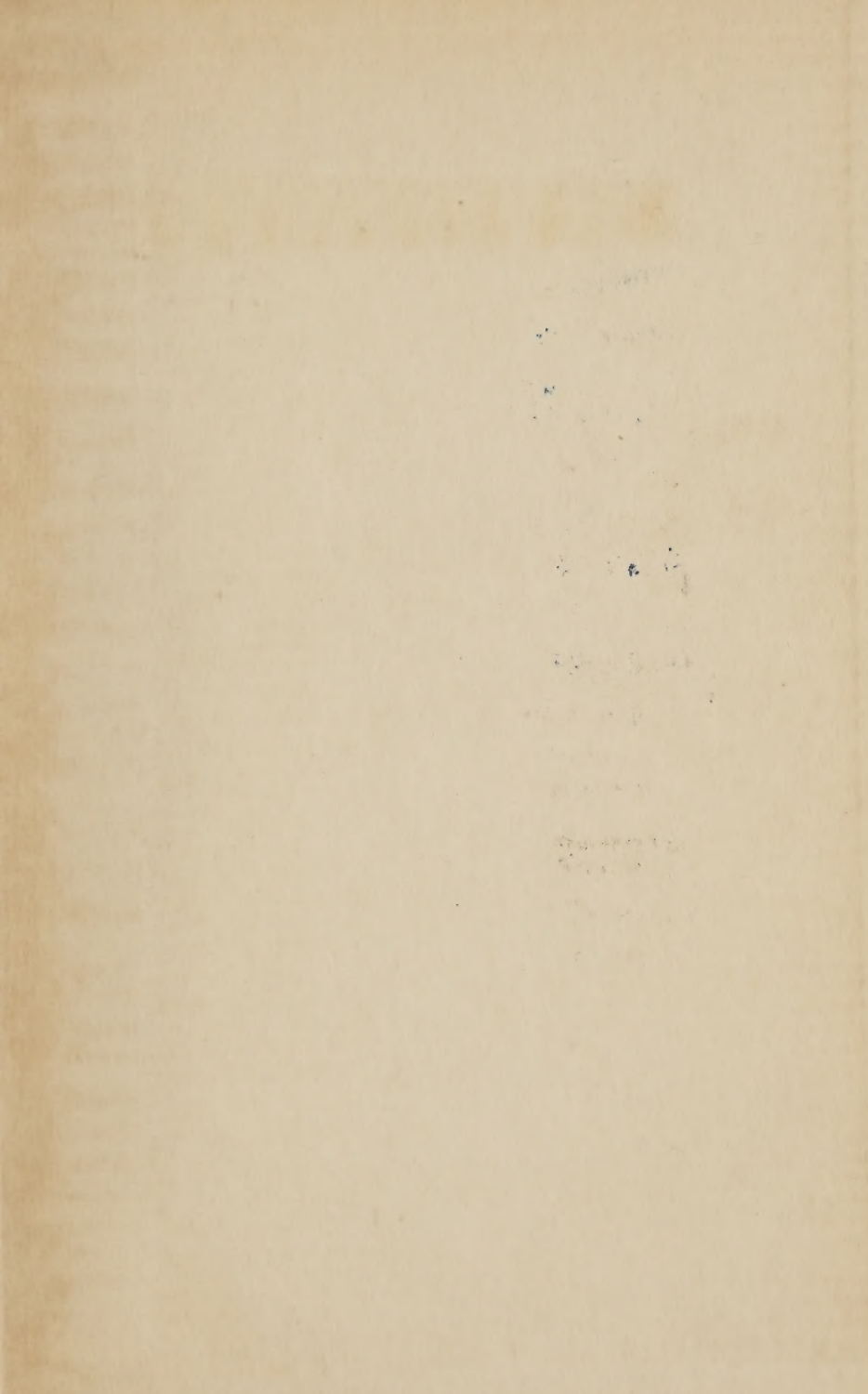
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